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The Editors
AFTER REYKJAVIK

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CHURCH & PARAGUAY

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NOVEMBER 7, 1986

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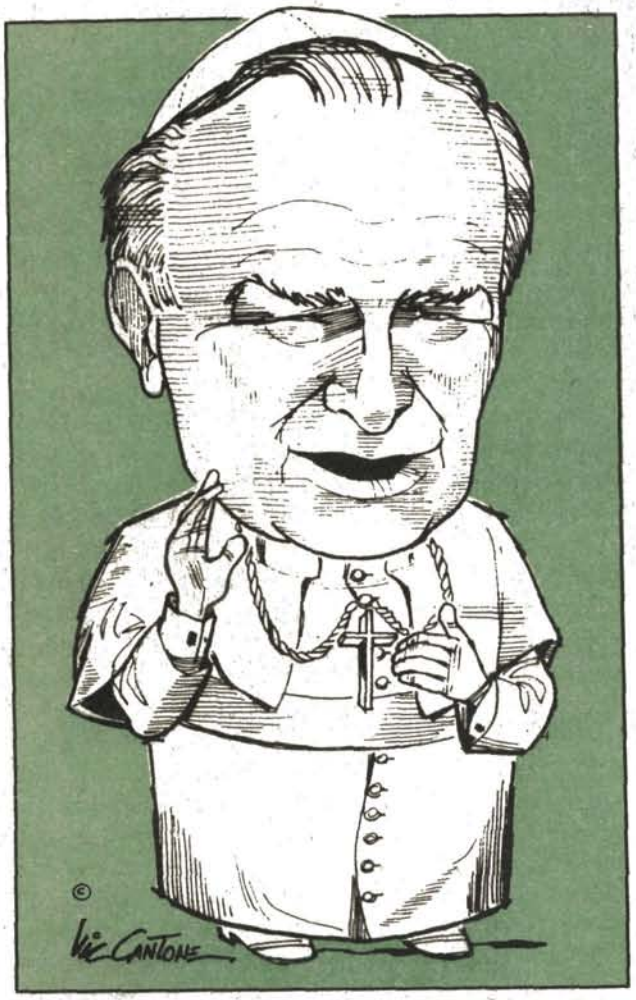

THE POPE OUR BROTHER

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Correspondence

The lay vocation

Mesa, Ariz.

To the Editors: As usual, Abigail McCarthy's "As the Synod Nears — II" [September 12] was a perceptive article on the state of lay people and lay ministry here in the United States. I agree with her that "many lay men and women see a lack of respect for the knowledge and expertise they possess from their education and the experience of their callings." I also, however, detect some of that same lack of respect and seriousness coming from Mrs. McCarthy when she compares those lay professionals who have experienced *their calling* as tied more closely to ecclesial structures than those lay people "in the marketplace" whose cause she rightly espouses. According to her, those lay ecclesial-type professionals with their "clerical" attitudes may be worsening the situation of the lay vocation rather than helping it.

Speaking as one of those lay professionals, a coordinator of a lay ministry program who also is chair of the National Association for Lay Ministry (an organization whose members consist of both marketplace and ecclesial type ministers) I believe most of us are sincerely attempting to affirm and nurture the growth of the lay vocation wherever it may be. In fact, our most recent national conference, held in June, at the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota (Mrs. McCarthy's *alma mater*), had its theme as "ministry in the marketplace," and our speakers were lay people who experience their ministries primarily there. We definitely do not see ourselves as "better" than other lay people, the vast majority of whom struggle daily "in the world." Ironically, however, we sometimes find ourselves, on the one hand, not taken seriously by some ordained church leaders because we have a vocation which includes family responsibilities and, on the other hand, under suspicion by some lay professionals in the marketplace because our vocations take us more within church structures.

I would ask Mrs. McCarthy to take another look at the lay professionals whom I represent, and to show us some of the same seriousness she advocates for those, like herself, who courageously, *as church*, are living out the lay vocation in the world. There is much we have in common. We all face financial difficulties, conflicts between family and professional responsibilities, concern for world peace and the lives of our children and grandchildren, a love for both church and world. Together, let us affirm the lay vocation and the growth of lay ministries wherever they may occur, for they truly are a sign of hope in today's church.

EDWARD C. SELLNER

Existing for others

Fukushima, Japan

To the Editors: I was happy to see that Abigail McCarthy in her column "As the Synod Nears — II" [September 12], managed to find some cause for hope amid the morass of clericalism. Nevertheless, in my opinion, until we clean up our language we will not be able to come to grips with the problem of ingrained clericalism that infects the church. Mrs. McCarthy as well as Russell Barta, whom she quotes, use traditional language that tends to bind us to a view of the church that is fundamentally erroneous.

To begin with, there is no such thing as the lay apostolate. The church is a community of equal sisters and brothers united in faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, to continue his apostolate. Every member of the church is called to this apostolate, spreading the Good News and prayer for and in the name of all people, sharing in Christ's priesthood. It is for this that we are all equally called.

This is not to deny the legitimacy or necessity of ministers within the church; it is to see their role in proper perspective. All ministries in the church, beginning with the Petrine ministry, exist only to enable all the members of the church to fulfill their God-given vocation, which the ministers, as Christians, also equally share. I prefer to use the word ministry for service to the members of the church and apostolate to designate the entire church's service of evangelization and prayer. Speaking in this way also reminds us that the church does not exist for itself but for others, and that the role of the ministers is subordinate to the apostolate of the whole community. Thinking of and speaking about the church in this way may hasten the day when the noxious weed of clericalism withers and dies.

JOHN FRAZIER

Innovative find

Grand Rapids, Mich.

To the Editors: I was very pleased to see my ancient (1938) words of wisdom in the *body* of *Commonweal*, since I place so much value on my few appearances in the correspondence section. I was even more pleased with Debra Campbell's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Rosary College Catholic Evidence Guild in "Lost Innovation" [June 6].

In 1938 and in 1940 I was in Oklahoma "street-preaching" and it was a sun-filled experience. Our consciousness of the church as discriminating patriarch had not been raised — we were far more concerned with "interracial justice" than with women's rights. There was a camaraderie among the priests and laity and the men and women who were involved in "Catholic Action" in those days, which came close to making them all *one in Christ*. Our love for him as he lived in the church was our prime motivation, and we really believed that the solution for the world's problems would come when *everybody* became a Roman Catholic. We were not entirely ignorant of the flaws in the institutional church, but they seemed very inconsequential

(Continued on 606)

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REYKJAVIK: THE PERIL & PROMISE

ICELAND has been called "The Land of Frost and Fire." Its rugged crust rests over a massive volcanic silo. In the late 1700s, that cold land exploded with near nuclear volcanic eruptions, decimating the island's inhabitants, many of whom starved in the cold aftermath. Even today, hot springs, geysers, and volcanoes lie side by side with massive glaciers, steaming pressure valves serving as a warning and perhaps a deterrent of gross natural catastrophe.

The collapse of the Reykjavik summit meeting early last month between President Reagan and Secretary General Gorbachev was quickly grasped by a waiting world in the remarkable instant the two emerged in top coats and hat from Hofdi house: their hard faces, diminished gaits, and palpable despondency said more than the weeks of reinterpretation which have followed. These were not the smiling faces we have come to expect and disregard in big power summitry. These were the drained faces of leaders who had met the crushing issues, engaged one another in the cold northern light, and tasted both promise and peril.

Was President Reagan adequately prepared for the Iceland summit? Not fully, it would appear. Had Mr. Gorbachev come to spring a trap? Obviously, he had come with a purpose. But what matters from Reykjavik forward is that a certain uncommon chemistry, fire and frost, made for a significant breakthrough: For the first time in clear memory superpower leaders broached in a direct manner not only the quandary and complexity of the nuclear issue, but even suggested significant, mutual, quantifiable nuclear reductions. This stunning meeting, then, has sent the world home more reflective and with some slight hope. The important question advanced by Reykjavik is not simply what does the world now want in terms of reducing the risks of nuclear war, but how is this to be accomplished in the near and long terms?

By our own design we have driven far too long and heedlessly down a one-way, narrowing, dead-end alley. Even since Reykjavik, together the U.S. and the USSR have manufactured six additional nuclear weapons each day. Thus, while the abyss is clearly unmistakable, the nuclear mechanism, driven so long by the superpowers' conscious decisions, makes escape from its clutches all the more dangerous, necessary, and seemingly intractable. There is but one option: a dead halt, and a careful reverse.

Earlier this year, the United Methodist bishops of the United States issued a pastoral letter on the nuclear crisis: *In Defense of Creation*. It was an indictment of what the bishops called "the idolatry of deterrence." In clear language the letter asked a question that eats at the heart, conscience, and nerves of just about everyone: How long can we keep threatening the unspeakable without losing our bodies, our souls, or both? The Methodist answer is that upon careful examination the Christian church's "just war tradition" does more to discredit the doctrine of nuclear deter-

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rence than to support it, both in considering the means and the ends of employing the superpowers' nuclear war capacity.

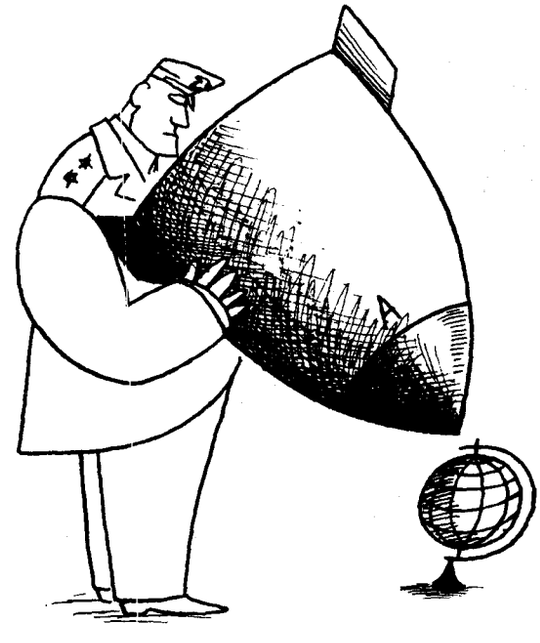
The U.S. Catholic bishops had examined these same questions in their 1983 pastoral, *The Challenge of Peace*. They opted for a "strictly conditioned acceptance of nuclear deterrence." Their acceptance was granted only on condition progress was being made to free the world of this selfsame dependence on nuclear deterrence. The U.S. Catholic bishops admitted that there existed in their conditional acceptance of nuclear deterrence both a *moral* and *political* paradox. Their stand, which seems at odds with the Methodist letter, won them few friends in the fields of either prophetic utterance or defense brinkmanship. Yet a close reading of the Methodist letter indicates that there exists a degree of concurrence that unites the two letters more practically than it separates them. For the Methodists write: "It will take prudent political leadership in partnership with all other nuclear weapons states, including 'enemies,' to conceive and implement step-by-step approaches to disarmament. Prudence is always a moral obligation."

It is this step-by-step approach to disarmament, recommended in both the Methodist and U.S. Catholic letters, that took an unprecedented and symbolically positive stride forward, if but briefly, at Reykjavik. The Reagan-Gorbachev meeting disclosed, as no other such meeting has, the precariousness a "backing-out process" will entail. There will have to be prudence at every turning, and a sustained willingness to maintain the process.

Some of the discussions at Reykjavik clearly failed this criterion, particularly the ideas floated concerning the abolition of all nuclear weapons in the next ten years. Like President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), such a suggestion may indicate the ability of some to offer magnificent dreams we would all aspire to, could they be accomplished without making the nuclear tinderbox all the more unstable. As things now stand, dreams like "Star Wars" and the abolition of all nuclear weapons in the next ten years are not realizable as advertised. For over a generation "extended deterrence," the U.S. nuclear guarantee to its NATO allies, has served as a restraining balance of power (and terror) in Europe. In the near future, even ten years worth, there is little to assume its place. While it may be heartening that Secretary of State Shultz now believes the U.S. and its allies might soon be ready to upgrade conventional forces in Europe to such an extent that these forces could balance the might of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops, it would take not only a tremendous change of political will in western Europe and the U.S., but a willingness by the Warsaw Pact to demobilize certain of its conventional forces. While such a process of equalization is taking place, stability would have to be maintained scrupulously at every step. And finally, even if such a goal were eventually accomplished, the question would yet have to be asked whether exchanging the absolute terror of nuclear warfare for the nearly absolute terror of modern conventional warfare — figuratively sweeping the house clean, and then inviting in seven equally apocalyptic spirits — is sufficient to address the ideological and political realities that motivate the conflicts between East and West.

Even such a discussion as this, however, would falter if the sticking point at Reykjavik had not been grappled with, namely President Reagan's vision of SDI. It is time that the nature of this concept, valuable as it might continue to be as a bargaining chip, be fully examined in public discussion in this country. When the *Economist* commented following Reykjavik that Mr. Reagan's "Disneyland explanation" of SDI "is almost certainly nonsense," it was laying a challenge before everyone in the West to clarify what reasonably constitutes the aims and practicality of a defense shield. Is a space-based shield needed when a similar degree of defense could be provided more economically by ground-based defenses developed within the terms of the ABM Treaty? Might the fears of the Soviet Union about SDI be realistic or legitimate? Might the technicians' dreams be factually unattainable but nonetheless destabilizing? And if the West were to pursue SDI, what could we expect by way of a Soviet response? Would we be inviting an even more ghostly apocalypse than the one we have already made imaginable?

Reykjavik must not be allowed to slip away into an icy sea, for despite a somewhat somnolent surface, the volcanic action beneath the present nuclear peace marks its own time. It must be quieted, rechanneled, and perhaps one day even finally stilled. To do this, steps must be taken, some of them already agreed to in principle at Iceland. First, a new test ban treaty on underground nuclear tests, limiting their size and number, should be agreed to at Geneva. Second, there must be a cooling of rhetoric and a reining in of the diplomatic evictions between the U.S. and USSR since Reykjavik. Third, meetings at Geneva should facilitate the Reykjavik-proposed reductions on intermediate-range nuclear forces. Fourth, the present SALT II limits on strategic weapons and delivery systems should be maintained. Finally, genuine debate on the merits of SDI should be ongoing in Congress and in the public square.



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To achieve a change in the world's nuclear calculus will require not only political courage but moral will. It will require, as the Catholic bishops wrote in 1983, "the willingness to open ourselves to the providential care, power, and word of God, which call us to recognize our common humanity and the bonds of mutual responsibility which exist in the international community in spite of political differences and nuclear arsenals."

EXPOSING THE OBVIOUS

When Attorney General Edwin Meese builds his case for judicial restraint, he asks, "What did the framers of the U.S. Constitution originally intend?" The question of original intention itself — not the manner in which Mr. Meese has posed it, apparently to undermine the power vested in the Supreme Court — follows historical precedent. New Testament scholars, for example, try to determine the original intention behind Jesus' sayings or the teachings of St. Paul. But when this same line of questioning is applied to the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) — a treaty which has become the lynchpin of future arms control negotiations between the superpowers — the tack fails. Here's why.

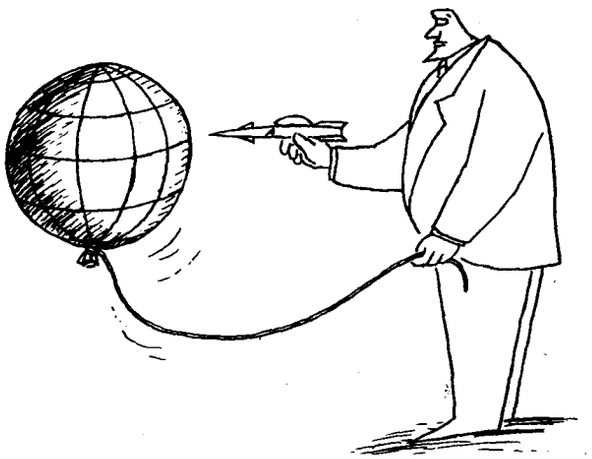
The validity of the original intention argument rests on how solid the need is to bore through a mountain of accretions formed over time, or to close gaps in distance and culture, or to make specific applications now that were unforeseeable when the principles were laid or the teachings were handed down. What has 2000 years of church tradition done to the original intentions of Jesus? What effect has modern European, Latin American, or U.S. culture had on biblical hermeneutics? What has 200 years of legislative and judicial decision-making done to the intentions of Madison and Jefferson? The point is that, given our tendencies to distort history for our own purposes, the question of original intention is itself legitimate.

Of course, the best historians, exegetes, and politicians recognize that the question of original intention cannot be asked in a vacuum devoid of presuppositions. For instance, interpreters who ask whether Jesus was politically subversive or politically indifferent, the founder of a church or a debunker of institutionalism and legalism, etc., bring to the interpretive task their own ideas of politics and institutions. So do interpreters who argue that an active judiciary balances the other branches of government and guides the process of democracy, or who argue the contrary: that it fetters both. Laying one's handful of presuppositions squarely on the table should be the first article in the interpreter's code of ethics.

What has this argument of original intention got to do with the ABM Treaty? Pardon us for stating the obvious: it has nothing whatsoever to do with it, really. But the argument of original intention is being misapplied to the ABM Treaty and billed as a new interpretation of it, in order to conceal the Reagan administration's adamant dissatisfaction with the accepted treaty interpretation blocking SDI.

One wonders at the audacity of "re-interpreting" a treaty so recent. Today's teenager can remember what happened in 1972, although to be fair, only a prodigy or a person over thirty should be expected to remember much about the treaty itself. But why wrack our own memories which are, at best, second-hand? We could invite virtually the entire negotiating team that drafted the original treaty and ask them — before television cameras if the truth were to be made public — "What did you intend when you wrote Article V?" *Each side undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based.* Every American president since the treaty's signing could be asked point blank for his understanding of these words.

Let there be no doubt about it, it's one thing to wonder what Jesus or Jefferson meant. It's quite another thing to re-interpret what negotiators meant who are standing within earshot of the "new interpretation."



ETC.

● In May 1985, E.F. Hutton and Company pleaded guilty to 2000 criminal counts of fraud in a bank overdraft scheme. Eight months later, the company was put on one year's probation and fined $350,000. None of its chief executive officers, however, were charged.

But what the Justice Department failed to do by exempting individuals, Hutton has now done itself — at least in part — in a fit of self-regulation. Hutton's own investigators found more than one dozen persons responsible for the illegal check-kiting operation and either fired them or subjected them to fines of up to $50,000.

Since Hutton picked up the tab for Griffin B. Bell, Edwin Meese's predecessor under President Carter, who headed the housecleaning, as well as fees for the attorneys retained by employees charged in the scheme, one wonders in the end whether Hutton lost money, broke even, or made a profit on the affair.

Perhaps Hutton's executives should now consider taking the series of seminars offered by its Peoria, Illinois office. Called Faith-Investing, the seminars not only assist clients to express their faith through investment choices, but the choices Hutton offers, their PR says, "make sense both financially and ethically."

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The church in Paraguay

TAKING A STAND
THE BISHOPS & GENERAL STROESSNER

ON THE main road from General Alfredo Stroessner International Airport in Asunción, Paraguay to the center of that pleasant colonial city, one passes an intersection of two main avenues, Avenida del Santissimo Sacramento and Avenida Generalissmo Franco.

The names are revealing in that they express what have stood as two of the main supports for the thirty-two-year-old Stroessner regime. Although the end of Spain's long fascist dictatorship has deprived Stroessner of one pillar of support, the growing identification of the Catholic church with a fast emerging opposition movement could be more decisive for Paraguay's political future.

"The church sees its task as being that of re-weaving the social fabric of the nation," Bishop Mario Melanio Medina told me recently. "Our service to the national community, which should not be interpreted as a struggle against the government, is to try to install a new social order in which all Paraguayans could participate with their ideas, their preoccupations, and their alternative proposals to resolve our problems, above all our socio-political ones."

In 1980 Msgr. Medina was appointed first bishop of the large new rural diocese of Benjamin Aceval in the impoverished Chaco region. For some Paraguayans his appointment was seen as continuing a tradition of prophetic episcopal leadership begun by the charismatic Bishop Ramon Bogarin Argana whose death at the age of sixty-five in 1976 deprived the Paraguayan episcopal conference of its one progressive voice. Not only has Bishop Medina become one of the most outspoken opponents of the dictatorship, but observers credit him with spurring a cautious bishops' conference to a more determined stand.

Under Bishop Bogarin Argana's inspiration, the church was actively involved in the growth of a network of peasant cooperatives called the Christian Agrarian Leagues in the early 1970s. Following a wave of cruel repression unleashed against them in 1976, which included the arrest of three priests and the expulsion of a number of Jesuits, the bishops remained generally silent, according to one Paraguayan who was actively involved in the leagues.

With the emergence of a new opposition movement this year, church leaders have once again begun to take sides. Asunción's nineteenth-century Hospital de Clinicas proved the unlikely center for the growth of this movement when police brutally repressed a peaceful march by doctors, nurses, and administrative staff to the Finance Ministry in April. Following the arrest of four doctors, an even bigger march was organized, this time with the active participation of student, peasant, and opposition trade union groups.

With the hospital under virtual siege by police, as staff went on strike for the release of their detained leaders, Archbishop Ismael Rolón of Asunción expressed his solidarity and said Mass for the strikers in a nearby church. Surprised by the widespread public support for the strike, the government released those detained. Although they won no raise in their average $40 monthly wage, Dr. Carlos Filozzola, who was held by police for twenty-two days, told me they achieved something more important. "We managed to awaken the general public. They are losing their fear," he said.

The significance of what was sparked by this determined protest was revealed on May 1. In opposition to the annual workers' day march organized by the government-controlled Paraguayan Confederation of Workers (CPT), the newly created Inter-Union Workers' Movement (MIT) organized a counter-march following a Mass celebrated by Bishop Medina in a downtown church. Although brutally repressed by baton-wielding police, for the first time since General Stroessner took power in 1954, a counter-march actually took place. For MIT spokesman Victor Baez Mosqueira, this was the greatest achievement. "A year ago we could not have believed how far we could have got by now," he told me.

Lending active support to this emerging movement, Archbishop Rolón headed a silent march for an end to repression and the return of democracy through downtown Asunción on May 30. Even more important for Paraguayans than the presence of some 800 priests and religious was the fact that the statue of the Virgin of Caacupe, the patroness of Paraguay, was carried in the march. Furthermore, the archbishop has made a critical and very concrete commentary on political events in bi-weekly statements read out at all Masses in the archdiocese.

In giving voice to what is really happening in Paraguay at the present moment, the church plays a crucial role. Since the government closed the independent daily newspaper *ABC Color* in March 1984, Paraguayans' only source of regular uncensored information and critical comment has been the opposition radio station Radio Nanduti. The radio and its courageous director, Humberto Rubin, have, however, been subject to constant harassment including thefts of equipment, attempts to destroy the station's transmitter, pressure on advertisers to withdraw support, and Rubin's own brief imprisonment. The day I visited the station, Rubin pointed to the three different cars with police agents parked outside, and we listened to the constant government interference which make his broadcasts inaudible.

Meanwhile, it was only when Bishop Medina accepted an invitation from a group of journalists who had worked in *ABC Color* to be director of a new monthly magazine *Nuestro Tiempo*, that they were permitted to publish. Despite Bishop Medina's active support, *Nuestro Tiempo* has to be printed outside Paraguay and cannot be sold openly in the country.

The only critical publication available on newsstands is the

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bi-weekly *Sendero,* the official organ of the bishops' conference. Its director, Ilde Silvero, told me that the paper's role is to provide a space where all sectors of Paraguayan opinion can find expression. Every number highlights a controversial political or social issue; recent numbers have dealt with divisions in the ruling party, the isolation of Paraguay among its now democratic neighbors, and police repression. The government's July prohibition of the director of the critical Catholic Radio Caritas, Fr. Javier Arancon, from re-entering the country appeared, however, as a warning shot to the church on its support for a more critical media.

By making its own a call by the weak and repressed opposition parties for a national dialogue between all social forces in the country, the church this year moved to center stage in Paraguay's political life. In his letter of invitation to the government to participate in the dialogue, Archbishop Rolón included a call for an end to the state of siege, in force for thirty-two years, and the release of all political prisoners.

Bishop Medina told me that since in Paraguay "there has never been democracy or participation, what the church hopes to achieve by the dialogue is that people accustom themselves to an interchange of ideas and to dialogue as rational and civilized people." Despite the government's refusal to participate, Bishop Medina is confident that emerging opposition sectors within the party will participate. Of the government, he says: "They may have the power now, but they'll have to start handing it over because things can't continue as they are. This is what the government does not want to see or admit, but sooner or later they will have to."

Beyond the opposition role being assumed by some bishops, however, the church has suffered from the thirty-two years of dictatorship. On a visit to a poor slum area on the outskirts of Asunción, I was able to verify the absence of the grassroots network of neighborhood groups, self-help projects, and basic Christian communities which characterize the poor neighborhoods of most Latin American cities. Only now are a few pastoral agents beginning to visit these areas in an attempt to begin Bible reflection groups, while the phenomenon of priests and religious going to live in poorer areas has hardly yet happened in Paraguay.

Significantly, these areas remain dominated by the local branches or *seccionales* of the ruling Colorado party. This, I was told, is the only political party known by the poor, and it is to the party they turn for help in their dealings with state agencies or for favors for their locale. Whatever funds or projects are channeled to them generally reinforce the paternalistic image of General Stroessner. One foreign priest who has worked for over twenty years in Paraguay assured me that were free and fair elections to be held tomorrow, the seventy-four-year-old Stroessner would gain around 60 percent of the vote.

Since the sudden ditching of long-time U.S. allies Duvalier of Haiti and Marcos of the Philippines early this year, attention has been focused on growing U.S. coolness towards dictators Pinochet and Stroessner. In the case of Paraguay, this has included growing contacts between U.S. ambassador Clyde Taylor and the opposition parties, and threats to cut off U.S. aid.

Having firmly supported General Stroessner, this apparent change of heart by the U.S. administration is regarded with some skepticism here. As Bishop Medina put it in an editorial in *Nuestro Tiempo*: "We don't see in the intention of the United States the sincere and disinterested desire to really help the Latin American peoples in their struggle against poverty and in favor of civil liberties and of respect for the human person." The bishop was giving his reasons for rejecting an invitation to visit the United States.

For too long Paraguay has been hidden and unknown to the outside world, Bishop Medina told me. With growing pressure for a political liberalization and with a planned visit from Pope John Paul next April, this at least is likely to change. What is less clear, having missed almost three decades of political development, is what the future holds in store for Paraguay.

PEADAR KIRBY

(Peadar Kirby is an Irish journalist currently working with Noticias Aliadas/Latinamerica Press *in Lima, Peru.)*

Of several minds: *David R. Carlin, Jr.*

RUNNING THE REPUBLIC

THE RED SOX, REYKJAVIK, & RE-ELECTION

MY FAVORITE New Testament passage is the one in which Jesus sums up the Law and the Prophets in the two commandments, love God and love your neighbor. This preference, however, should not be taken as a sign of any particular inclination toward charity on my part. It's just that the older and busier I get, the less time and capacity I have for studying anything in depth, and the more, therefore, I appreciate one- or two-sentence summaries that capture the essence of some vast and complex discipline.

In terms of formal training, for example, I confess to being an economic ignoramus. I can barely tell, for instance, the difference between M-1 and M-2 (for a long time I thought they were rifles), and until the other day I had believed that David Ricardo was married to Lucille Ball. Yet despite these surface deficiencies, I have meditated deeply on that golden saying, "There's no such thing as a free lunch," with the result that I now know more essential economics than the ordinary student learns from mastering all the great theorists from Adam Smith through Jack Kemp.

In philosophy my tentative preferred summary is Whitehead's remark about

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the history of philosophy being but a series of footnotes to Plato. This has the incidental inconvenience of requiring that one know Plato. So I'm sure there's room for a still better summary.

In history, Hegel's *Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht* will do. As for politics, the sum and substance of the thing is contained in Tip O'Neill's epigram: "All politics is local politics."

On this last theme I qualify as something of an expert, since, at the moment of writing, I happen to be up to my eyeballs in local politics, campaigning for a fourth term in the Rhode Island Senate. Why any rational being should want to be in the Rhode Island Senate — where we get paid $300 per year for a session that runs from January to May or June, and for a bonus get abused by substantial numbers of the public who are convinced that we are up to no good — I can't imagine. Even less can I imagine why anyone would want to spend four or five months campaigning for this thankless position every two years. Yet I do it.

The major issue in my campaign this year is the issue of what to name a new bridge being built over the west passage of Narragansett Bay. An Italo-American weekly based in Providence wants it named, for understandable reasons of ethnic pride, after Giovanni da Verrazano, the Florentine navigator, who spent a couple of weeks in Narragansett Bay about the year 1520 while in the employ of Francis I of France. There are, however, relatively few Italians in my district, whereas 40 percent of my constituents live on the island of Jamestown, where the new bridge will touch down. Virtually to a man/woman, Jamestowners want the new bridge named, for understandable reasons of local pride, "The Jamestown Bridge" — which, moreover, has for nearly half a century been the name of the old bridge that the new one will replace.

So it didn't require a great deal of study before I was able to discern the rightness of naming it after Jamestown and the wrongness of naming it after Verrazano, who in any case already has a bridge. At the same time, I have been gracious in my rejection of Verrazano, declaring that he, along with Roger Clemens, was one of my boyhood idols. (In New England in 1986 no politician can go wrong by associating himself as closely as possible with the Red Sox.)

The most memorable fifteen minutes of my campaign this year took place late in the afternoon of Sunday, October 12. I was ringing doorbells and driving my car from house to house, listening on my car radio to snatches of the Red Sox-Angels American League Championship Series fifth game. The Sox, trailing three games to one, were down 5-2 in the top of the ninth; three more outs and they had lost the pennant.

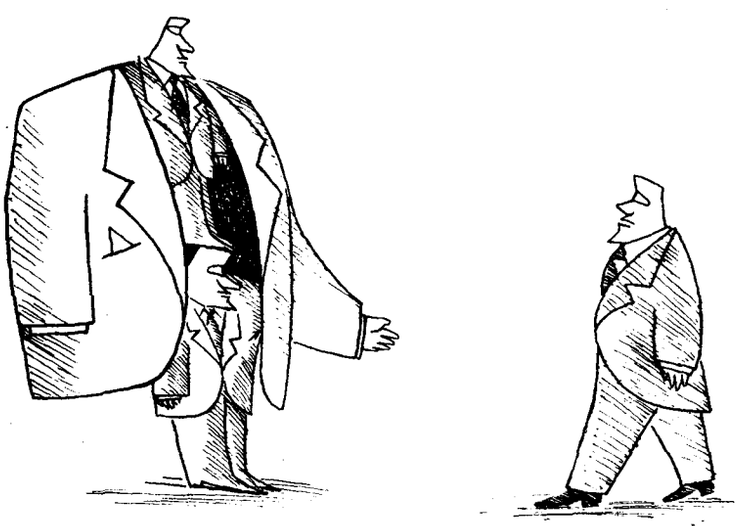
A visibly upset woman answered the door at the next house. At first I figured she was distressed by the imminent demise of the Red Sox. But no. She had just heard that the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik had broken up in failure. "What can we do?" she asked in obvious pain. "What can we do about Reagan? What can we do about the insanity of the arms race?" For months my political thinking had dwelt on nothing more profound than the name of the new bridge, so I couldn't slip my brain into the gear required to talk about arms control. The best I could manage was to stand there with a stupid look on my face. I wanted to protest that she was violating Tip O'Neill's golden rule; she was polluting the pure stream of local politics with the muddy waters of international affairs.

But she rescued me by announcing that, by way of punishing Reagan, she would vote against all Republicans on the November ballot. Though myself a Democrat, I thought this might be a bit unfair to my GOP friends, including my opponent, who, to the best of my knowledge, is not regularly consulted either by the president or by the State Department. But on the principle of not looking gift horses in the mouth, I confirmed her in her noble intention. And thus it happened that the Reykjavik failure, though no doubt a tragedy for the human race at large, gained me an extra vote, thereby proving itself to have certain redeeming qualities.

A few minutes later I picked up a few more votes when I walked into a house where four or five people were watching the Red Sox game on TV. The score was now 5-4, Dave Henderson at bat, the count two and two. The crowd in the house was in no mood to hear my electoral pitch, but they invited me to watch the game with them. When Henderson hit the next pitch for a two-run homer, they went wild, promising to vote for me on the grounds that I had brought them good luck.

Such is the material local politics is made of. It's a hell of a way to run a republic. Yet we could do worse, I suppose, than to have semi-crazy people like myself running themselves ragged trying to get votes on the basis of bridge names, the Red Sox, and the failure of arms control summits.

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.



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Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

A HOLLOW RING

THE BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON MISSION

IN THEIR November meeting the bishops of the United States will vote on the third draft of a pastoral few of us knew was being written: "To the Ends of the Earth — A Pastoral Statement on World Missions by the Bishops of the U.S." Its purpose is "to stimulate and inspire all the Catholic faithful . . . religious and laity, especially in their role as catechists and educators, as well as missioners." Asked to reflect on it with a group of missioners and leaders of church organizations recently, I found it a disappointing document.

The letter has certain strengths: It is richly scriptural in its sources and factual and realistic in its description of the present missionary situation. It also links its message to that of the pastorals, "The Challenge of Peace" and "Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy." But it side-steps many of the contemporary issues which present problems for Catholics today.

It is still largely a clerical document with little that speaks to the laity in mission or specifically to the women in mission. Implicit in it is a separation and distinction between priests and people. What Virginia Sullivan Finn said of the *Vatican Lineamenta* prepared for the Synod on the Laity — that it presents a vision "without dealing seriously with how it is to come about" — could be said of this document as well.

The pastoral gives only passing lip service to ecumenism — to what we share with and learn from other Christian communions — and the dialogue with the great non-Christian world religions. Such language as there is is almost directly drawn from the Vatican II Decree, thus scanting the ecumenical missionary experience of the intervening years. (It is surely worth remembering that one of the strong impulses toward Christian unity was the desire of missioners to end the scandal of Christian division, a stumbling block for the people to whom they were sent.) There is, therefore, the big unanswered question: *Why do we evangelize in the name of the Roman Catholic church?* In what sense is it to us the true church to which we invite others? This question was valiantly addressed by Sebastian Moore, O.S.B., in the October 10 issue of *Commonweal*.

It goes without saying that a pastoral letter can only sketch and indicate; it cannot spell out everything in detail. This letter, however, seems to address complexity with perhaps deceptive simplicity, especially in the references to the American Catholic historical experience. In fact, the point of view is largely unhistorical — a serious flaw when we remember that the great contribution of the Judeo-Christian tradition is the belief that the Lord entered history as recorded in the Hebrew Bible, entered time as man as we are told in the New Testament, and that the Holy Spirit leads us to the fullness of time, the end-of-time. Surely missioners must be thoroughly grounded in their own history, culture, and national character before they can fruitfully deal with other cultures.

When we think of the missionary heroes cited in the letter such as Junipero Serra and Isaac Jogues, we must also think of the Spanish and French destruction of native Indian cultures and, in retrospect, the failure of the two-century-long effort to evangelize the Indians. When we speak of the European missioners who came to our shores with the tides of immigrants in the nineteenth century we must not ignore the two-century-long struggle between those who saw a positive climate for the church in the pluralism of America and those "Europeanizers" who did not. This latter struggle went on long enough to see the silencing of John Courtney Murray and ended only — if it did end — with Vatican II. The length of the struggle for "inculturation" in our own country should give us some measure of the patience and strength it takes to achieve it in any culture.

Lastly, although I admit it is difficult to see how the pastoral could deal with the problem, the present juridical oppression within the church gives a hollow ring to statements like the following: "The church does not *coerce* others (italics mine) to accept the Gospel and to join its ranks. . . . If we extend an invitation well, witnessing in the love of God and the image of Christ, and with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we have fulfilled Christ's mandate. Free acceptance of the Gospel and conversion to Christ . . . *is the work of God's grace*, a mystery which is beyond comprehension and which we accept in faith." As Archbishop Weakland has written recently, "When we read of the cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition, we say to ourselves that was another world, far from our own . . . a bad dream." But the suppression in the first decade of this century when seminaries were closed, theological periodicals suppressed, a network of "informers" in each diocese organized, and "fear and distress were everywhere" took a terrible toll. It held the church out of the tide of Christian growth and self-understanding for more than half a century. If cruelties, suppression, and coercion exist *within* the church, how can it present a face of charity and communion to others?

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

7 November 1986: 585

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HOW TO COPE WITH PETER'S SUCCESSOR

The pope, our brother

WILLIAM M. SHEA

ONE OF THE many reasons that I enjoy reading Jewish novelists who write about being Jewish is that they make me feel a bit easier about being Roman Catholic. There actually are people who are even more hopelessly what they are than I am what I am. Catholic novelists paint a picture of modern Catholics, from communal types to apostates, who cannot quite get the smell of incense out of their nostrils. Something of the same sort happens to American Protestants, according to John Updike, from the descendants of the Puritans to Lutherans and Episcopalians. John Dewey, as we were recently reminded by Bruce Kuklick (*Churchmen and Philosophers*, Yale University Press, 1985), never quite got over his liberal Congregationalist origins. Traditions and churches catch us unaware.

Feeling and affectivity are basic determinants of expressions of faith, of belief, and of ecclesial communion. The best piece I have ever read on this is Jonathan Edwards's *Treatise on Religious Affection* (Yale University Press, 1985). Ignatius of Loyola supposes throughout the *Spiritual Exercises* that in conversion and commitment feelings must be transformed, and that something of the rock bottom truth about one's own being can be uncovered in them. Contemporary Catholics agree, among them Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, Rosemary Haughton, David Tracy, and Robert Doran.

In addition to the theologians to whom I pay attention, I also read some American philosophers, especially James, Dewey, Royce, and Santayana. By them I am confirmed in my conviction that feeling is the power of and (usually) the limit to my action and thinking, to the worlds of meaning that are open to me. I do not think this is a bad thing, though I was brought up to mistrust feeling, and I know it has to be watched. At any rate, I am glad that there are novelists, theologians, and philosophers who do not let me forget that I am bound and loosed and even lost and saved by feeling. If not the last thing that must be said about salvation, it certainly is the first.

All this is preface to the admission, in these times often difficult to make with unalloyed joy and pride, that the Catholic church is my world of meaning, the best thing I know in the world, and that it has become so for me not so much through thinking as through feeling. I am a Roman Catholic intellectually, spiritually, even psychologically. If you can stand such an exaggeration, I am a Catholic biologically. The Catholic church is the home of my heart and mind; it is my mythic family. For all its male headship the church seems to me a mother. I have the church all tangled with my own mother and with Mary the mother of God and with the woman I love. I think Freud was right about churches and tabernacles and wombs. The church's ancient doctrines, her worship, her remarkable theological tradition and spiritual wisdom, her forms of life, even her sins, are mine. I doubt that I would be at home elsewhere, not because other churches are not good places or good enough places for me; it is just that I know where I belong. And there is something final about this. This feeling, ripened into a conviction. I am not analyzing or defending, but simply stating it as a fact.

In addition to my feeling about the church, I have a view of her. She is vital, gracefully engaged in the salvation of the world, volatile, full of power for Christian life, promising, conflicted, confused, wrong-headed, stubborn, authoritarian, even perverse. Although sometimes small-minded, she is no small church. She is a great church, broad enough to embrace dissent and disagreement and doubt and a nearly incredible variety of styles and understandings of Christian life, from the cloister to *comunidades*, from *The Catholic Worker* to *The Wanderer*, from Lefebvre (who chooses not to stand her as she is) to Küng (who chooses to do so).

I love the Catholic church. I was born into her three weeks after being born into the world. I will die in her should God give me grace. Why? When I was a child my parents taught me my prayers; they were Catholic prayers, prayers I now teach

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my sons. My parents took me to church and showed me where to find God, and he showed himself to me in the church's worship and witness. Among the memories of my childhood there is the picture of my father, a mighty man indeed, kneeling at Mass on Sunday saying the rosary. To this day my mother, now alone, gets into bed at night with the rosary in her hand. I have in my office desk the rosary of Mother Seraphine Hart, O.S.U., given me when she died ten years ago. Such chains one does not break. They form the heart, give it its habits. My parents knew where God is and so do I. My sense of the wholeness of human life and the hope of the wholeness of my own life is the gift the church has given me.

Furthermore, I am unable to make for my affections a distinction between "Catholic faith" and an "institutional church." As much as I now spontaneously dislike hierarchs and mistrust ecclesiastical bureaucrats, I think the distinction is intellectually almost worthless and even a self-deception. Nor can I bring myself to say I love the church when her leaders are correct and not when they are mistaken. There is, to my mind, no institutional church of unfeeling bureaucrats on the one side and a nearly invisible church of good Catholics on the other. For me there is only one church, right and wrong, sinful and saved all at once. What you see is what you get, *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. I am sad at her sins, as I am at my own. I am wary of her penchant for intellectual and spiritual repression — as I am at my own fear of power and my primal resentment of criticism. I find writ large in her life my own struggle, my own good and evil, truth and lie, life and death. Still, she is the place in the world where God has found me and I have found God, and what I have found in her is worth far more than the price I have had to pay — and the price has not been small, frankly.

ON TO MY topic: How to cope with the pope. As a question it is significant. A mere thirty years ago it would not, could not, have been asked, at least in my circles in the east Bronx. But it is undoubtedly asked across the Catholic world today, and not only by the theologians, the bishops, and the nuns who are threatened by him. The very occurrence of the question marks a shift in post-Tridentine Catholic sensibility, for I cannot avoid the question which my parents and theirs could not have raised.

But it is not a new question, raised only in the peculiar set of circumstances of the past few years. Catholics of the ancient Eastern church raised it a thousand years ago, and coped by excommunicating the pope. The reformers of the sixteenth century raised it, and their answer amounted to a drastic reshaping of the entire ecclesial life of western Europe. Unfortunately, in doing so they thrust the remainder of the church even further into papal arms. The question came up at the end of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth to a generation of Catholic scholars who coped by maintaining two generations of tomb-like silence. If the statisticians are correct, the question has occurred to over a million American Catholic women over the past decade who have coped by leaving the church.

The question, in other words, is not mine alone. It is a church-wide question, an ancient one, and one freighted with meaning for the future of Christianity. It is not merely a personal question, any more than it is the question of a few. It should occur and will occur to any seriously reflective Catholic of our time, and, indeed, to the whole church. Umberto Eco recently wondered whether Thomas Aquinas would be a Catholic were he alive today. Eco is probably correct: the question would have occurred to Aquinas. And, not surprisingly, it is occurring in the Reformation churches again — at something of a safe distance I might add, for which distance they must these days thank God.

I do not think the question is about the present pope alone, although he seems singularly able to force it upon us in an acute form. It would and should be raised about any pope, for it is a question about office and authority in the church. To use a worn analogy, it is a family question: how can Catholics live together, love one another, cherish common values and truths, support one another in life, retain and enhance their individual dignity, maturity, freedom, and self-respect under a ravenously monarchical and patriarchal leadership, much of whose ecclesiastical political agenda and self-conception runs against our experience, our knowledge, and our hope? How can we tell our own "family leaders" that they *have* made mistakes and *are* making them, injuring the very family they love and wish to serve? How can we make careful distinctions between what our family leaders have done so well and so rightly, and where they have gone off, need to change, and even to mind their own business? I view coping with the pope as this kind of question: how do we love the Catholic church in its actual forms of life and authority, and survive as human beings, as adults, as Christians?

Well, first of all — and this is evident in Catholic faith as well as in secular common sense — by recognizing that the pope and the bishops are not God, they are not the incarnate Son of God, nor are they the church of God. They are simply brothers in the Christian family who, more often than they should, take themselves more seriously than they can afford to do. The family belongs to God, and we ought to resist as the plague the pronounced tendency of our leaders to identify their wishes and beliefs with those of God. With God we must be as the lilies of the field and the birds of the air in obedience, loyalty, and trust; with popes and bishops we have to keep at least one eye open, for our failures are more than likely matched in number and quality by theirs. Only God deserves our unconditioned loyalty, trust, and obedience. Anyone else must earn a measure of each and must hold them by being worthy of them in action. If even Peter is to be trusted, he must be trustworthy. History displays a solid number of his successors whose denial of their Master, although sometimes more subtle than Peter's, was far more radical and disastrous in its consequences. They did not prove worthy of our trust. The present bishop of Rome is, to my mind, perilously close to losing his claim on our trust, obedience, and loyalty.

Granted, though the bishops are brothers, they are not exactly chums. They have tasks and responsibilities that I do

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not have or want, burdens that I could not shoulder. In the Catholic conception they are responsible for the social unity of the church, for the guidance of common action, for articulation of the community's faith and belief, for the oversight of worship, for the probity of teaching. They, and the pope as chief among them, are preeminently (but not exclusively) responsible for the shaping of the Catholic tradition for the future. As such they deserve my attention, my respect, and my prayers, and they get all three.

THEY ALSO deserve my criticism, my fraternal correction. I must be willing to live by my conscience, and to be willing to tell the officers of the church what I discover about the Christian life, to tell them when it appears to me they lead the church properly and when improperly, where they understand rightly and where they fail to understand. As I myself take the officers seriously and take their teaching to be a possible mediation of God's word to me, so I expect that they take my ministry, my understanding, my experience seriously. When I do not take them seriously, I am lessened; when they fail to take me seriously, they are lessened; in both cases the church is lessened. While I am not naive enough to think that they care what I think and believe, I am as obliged to communicate it to them as they are their thoughts and beliefs to me. The obvious and simple difference has turned out to be that I care to know what they think, and they do not care to know what I think.

In the past it has been made perfectly clear to Catholics that the ministers of the church must be obeyed, trusted, listened to; in the future it must also be made clear that the Catholic people must be listened to, obeyed, trusted. There will be little ear given to ministers who will not listen to their church. Ministers are servants, not kings, as Jesus taught (Mk 10:42-44). The fact that the bishops sit on the chairs of the apostles does not give a spontaneous and immediate, much less an eternal, legitimacy to their every word and action; the chairs earn them our persistent critical attention as well as our persistent respect, even when we can no longer trust and obey one or all of them. They have conceived themselves to be the voice of God in the church. They now need to grow ears to match the divine size of their mouths, for there is far more coming out through the mouth than going in through the ears. What should be a Christian communal dialogue has become a monologue.

We must all take care that our self-interest, self-protectiveness, primitive rage, bias, ignorance, pride of life and place, and fear do not inspire and direct our criticism, but still, even with the knowledge of our vices, we cannot refrain from trying to tell the truth to and about our leaders. The pope is a poor little man who will soon enough die and answer to the Father of us all. Before that throne his miter will be of no avail. He needs our patience, our forbearance, our encouragement, our support as well as our correction, each in season. He has had years of the first four, and the season for the last is surely upon him.

This pope is an extraordinary man. He is intelligent, serious, energetic, charismatic, a talented manipulator of the media, a moving liturgist and homilist. He may even be holy enough to clear a future Vatican committee on canonization. He is also proving himself dangerous. Precisely because he is so unusually gifted, he is doing great harm to himself, to the church, to his office. He is a strong-willed man who seems no longer able to distinguish what he wants from the will of God for the church. He is deeply convinced of the primacy of his office in the church. He could use a spot of detachment from it. He has made his own authority the center of our attention, and I fear that he and the church will suffer the consequences of that mistake.

He is rightly convinced of the value of the priesthood and the importance of religious communities of men and women, but he must learn that ministry and religious life must change if their value to the church is to be enhanced. He knows, perhaps better than anyone in the church, that he and the leaders of the church as well as we lay Catholics must defend the dignity and the freedom of every person in every area of political and social life, but he forgets that on his shoulders there falls the chief responsibility to defend every person *in the church* and especially so when their freedom and dignity are threatened by his colleagues and himself. He knows that the world — that is, sin and its law — is a constant threat to our secular political life, but he must learn that sin and its law are not outside the church but in it, and not only in us, but in himself as well. His office and he himself, in one of their fundaments, are worldly, are secular, are political. Yet he wishes us to treat him and it as though they are sacred only.

To put it in classical Catholic terms: infallible he may be; impeccable he is not. He appears the sort of man who is not plagued by self-doubt. His predecessor, Paul VI, who taught quite forthrightly, was able to hold together a church in turmoil at least in good part because we all knew he suffered with the church and that he would not break the bent reed. A good belt of hesitation and doubt might not be a bad thing for this pope, for he throws the church into turmoil by his determination to calm it, and thinks he can calm it by his command. While his ministry has been a grace for the church in many respects, he, like us all, has much to learn and to repent of. Sadly, like us again, he will probably do little of either.

THE nature and function and limits of the papacy itself are a problem yet to be met by the church. The beginning of reform indicated by the Second Vatican Council — that is, that the papacy is a constitutional monarchy rather than an absolute one, and that law binds the legislator — has collapsed again in the press of events and under the weight of the papal personality. Although the structure and the general lines of the exercise of authority remain much the same as they had been, there is no small shift in the Catholic understanding of and response to ministerial leadership. One practical aspect of the problem — among many others — is the relationship between the pope and his men on one side and theological inquiry on the other. This is exemplified in the troubles throughout the present pontificate of Schillebeeckx, Hassler, Pohier, Boff, Küng, and now Curran. We remember as well Kosnik, McNeil, and Wilhelm. The problem is evident in the document produced under Car-

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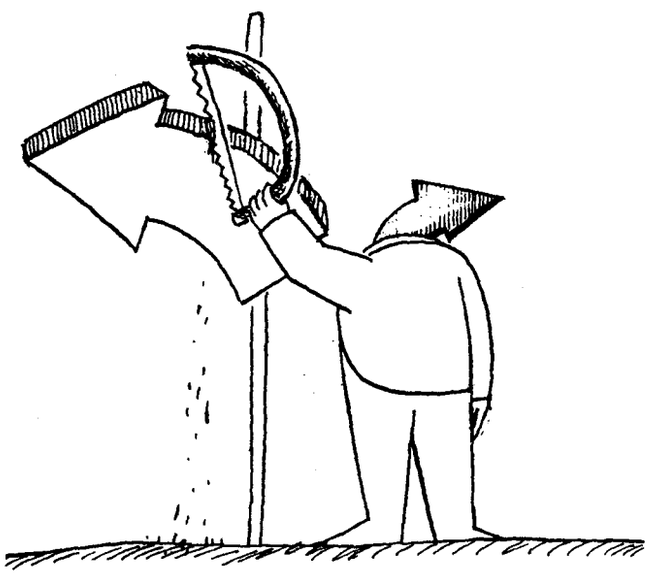
dinal Baum in which a Roman oversight of all theological faculties is envisioned. It is deepened by the outrageous actions of Cardinal Hamer toward the twenty-four, originally ninety-six, signers of the *New York Times* advertisement, and in the most distressing refusal of the Apostolic Delegate and the Archbishop of San Francisco to celebrate Mass for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. It reaches near unbelievable, but perhaps its most revelatory, heights in the public humiliation of the Archbishop of Seattle.

Rome (and its American supporters in these matters) is asserting direct and autocratic control over theologians, their teaching, and their publication. We can now expect a major battle. I doubt very much that Catholic theologians, for all of their historical timidity and deference to bishops, will submit to the control that obtained prior to the Council and that for half a century devastated Catholic intellectual and spiritual life. Professionally and personally I fear that we are witnessing a revivification of the imprudent and mean spirit that has plagued Catholicism so often, namely suspicion of inquiry, intolerance of difference, and suppression of dissent. It must be said, clearly and unequivocally, that the pope himself is responsible for this far more than the theologians who, almost without exception, have conducted themselves responsibly and decently. When they have, in one or two instances, behaved immoderately, it has usually followed upon immoderate provocation. For this coming trouble the pope himself must answer. He has tossed aside his conciliatory and constructive role and has decided to crush those he cannot cow.

There remains to be mentioned that tangle of issues having to do with sexuality. Each strand is distinct, but all have finally to do with the Roman Catholic leadership's inability and unwillingness to get itself straight on sex. They are: family life, divorce and remarriage, premarital and extramarital sex, birth control, abortion, homosexuality, masturbation, the role of women in ministry, their ordination to the priesthood, the celibacy of the clergy, and the male monopoly of leadership. Some have suggested that sex is, at bottom, the issue that clogs up our Catholic calendar. Fear of women, and perhaps hatred of them, may well be just what we have to work out of the Catholic system. No doubt the values articulated by the pope for the church are ours as well: that human life is sacred in all its instances, that married love is sacramental, and that reproduction links us to God. But many disagree with his traditionalist stand on specific cases as well as with his statement of moral norms. I hope that the discussion, even the debate, continues charitably and without acrimony, but surely a settlement cannot be imposed without harming the deepest weave of church life. I suspect that a large portion of the Catholic people will not take seriously a teaching on sexuality that has not taken seriously their experience and understanding. Again, I doubt that the pope and his men will be able to force a homogeneity of thinking and acting upon Catholics. If this is what he intends, he is in for difficult days.



HOW then do I cope with the pope? There are personal and political sides to the answer. For myself, I will love him as I did his predecessors, follow his lead, obey his rightful authority when it is respectfully exercised, be loyal to his position as chief guarantor of church unity, trust his powerful Catholic instincts when he displays them rather than the sectarian ones to which he sometimes falls prey. I intend to find God's will and Christ's Gospel in his ministry whenever I can. I also will act as a responsible adult, surrender my mind and heart to no man or woman but to God alone, disagree firmly and directly when I must, and stand open to reasonable and responsible criticism. I intend to speak in whatever forum is provided me against the mistakes and injustices being worked by the present leaders of the church. I will live my life according to the Gospel I learned within the church, will speak it as I can, and will hand it back at the end in one piece. I shall sin and repent, as will the pope; I shall err, and so will he; I shall die as he will. While I live he is my brother in the Lord and I shall so regard him. I expect him to treat me and my brothers and sisters as such, and I will raise a protest when he does not. I will continue to pray that he finds constructive outlets for his enormous gifts and comes to a better opinion of American Catholics and of theologians especially.

On the political side, I have few expectations but some hopes. I hope that the American bishops will hedge round his threat to American religious women and American theologians. He and his men must be moderated; persons and institutions must be protected. The bishops have a pastoral responsibility to do that. But in order to do it the current wave of *papolatry* must be broken for the sake of the petrine office as well as the rest of the church. Secondly, I hope that the bishops will begin a regular, direct, and forthright dialogue with the theologians, and especially with the ones whom they do not understand and with whom they disagree. This step is utterly essential to the health of the American church and its institutions of higher learning, and to the ability of the bishops themselves to lead the American church.

The theologians, I hope, will prepare for a long and painful struggle over the values they have come to espouse and the

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church they love. They must organize for it; they must be prepared to carry their side of it to the American bishops and to the Catholic public, the latter when it is clear that private communication of views is ignored. Above all, they must not slip into the silence of the marionette as their predecessors did in far different circumstances at the beginning of our century. There may come a time (if, for example, the bishops are unwilling to protect them) when we must, as Lyndon Johnson put it, hunker down like a Pedernales jackrabbit in a windstorm. But let us hope we can stand and make our quotient of noise. It seems to me, too, that theologians should come up with suggestions for such modifications of church government and law as will obviate the continual strain between the pastoral and reflective offices in the church.

Finally, we lay Catholics will continue to cherish the values of mutual respect, freedom of speech, democratic interaction, and institutional self-criticism. Even the few bishops who may not like to hear from us ought to, and on a regular basis. We should not forget that, whether we agree with them or not, theologians such as Charles Curran and the religious women who signed the *New York Times* advertisement did so out of solidarity with us and with absolutely nothing to gain themselves. We may not save them from the consequences of their acts, but we can let them know that they do not stand alone.

THE ASPIRATIONS & EXPLOITS OF JESSE JACKSON

'He is somebody'

JIM SLEEPER

A VISITOR to Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant on January 4, 1984 would have found the normally down-at-the-heels ambience of Fulton Street electrified. Jesse Jackson was winging his way from Damascus to the White House, bearing in triumph Navy flier Robert O. Goodman, who had been shot down and imprisoned by Syria during an American bombing raid over Lebanon a month before. On Fulton Street there was no organized celebration, but as blaring radios and newsstand headlines told the victory, the mood resembled South Boston's whenever the Celtics win a basketball championship. The pace on the street quickened, and amid the young men's spirited "high fives," even oldsters grinned broadly, elated.

Few on Fulton Street would have been making a "pan-Muslim" connection between black and Syrian interests; fewer still would have known of President Hafez al-Assad's darker purposes in accommodating Jackson's plea for Goodman's release. Their emotion was simpler, and to that extent apparently more benign: a black man in uniform had carried himself as an American patriot, while another black man's feat in rescuing him seemed to be confirmed rather than co-opted by President Reagan's gracious, if calculating, Rose Garden reception. A brass ring had been caught, an American Dream come true, if only symbolically, for people badly needing such symbols. The surge of racial pride, even of jubilant black nose-thumbing at the striped-pants diplomats Jackson had bested, seemed to follow an impeccably American tradition of ethnic celebration: the Great Black Hope had scored.

Something about that moment encapsulates what I take to be the rearguard defense of Jackson expressed by some of his more thoughtful supporters in the wake of the devastating disclosures and criticisms made in *Jesse Jackson and the Politics of Race* (Jameson Books, $17.95, 276 pp.) by Thomas N. Landes and Richard M. Quinn, and in Adolph L. Reed, Jr.'s *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon* (Yale, $5.95 pager, 176 pp.). Both books give considerable backing to the charges that Jackson has been deceitful, opportunistic, and manipulative of black concerns for his own aggrandizement. Dialectically, Jackson-backers often argue, the awesome shift in young blacks' horizons engendered by Jackson's comings and goings on the world stage, the stunning new assertion of black confidence which even a president had to respect, overwhelms the preacher's little personal hypocrisies and whatever structural damage authors like Landress, Quinn, and Reed think his charismatic brokerage has done to black political development.

Nor has Jackson's defense stopped there. Coming out of last summer's convention, the Rainbow Coalition insisted it was a movement broader than one man's presidential aspirations. When it's suggested that Jackson's dramatizations of inequity and raw need reflect a collection of narrow group claims rather than a truly coherent program for empowering the "left-out people," we're cautioned against employing a double standard: so what, for example, if Jackson's "black" foreign policy nourishes the dangerous illusion that American blacks can really extricate themselves from U.S. diplomacy to pursue the

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chimera of a new "Third World Order" with the likes of Assad? Have Reagan's own handling of foreign policy (say in Lebanon) and his misappropriations of patriotism proved any less opportunistic or damaging to genuine American interests? As for the Rainbow Coalition's alleged failure to embody a consistent, coherent agenda, are "responsible" black elites who oppose Jackson any less given to pandering? Why single him out when he's merely beating putative statesmen of all races at what is all too obviously their own cynical game? At least Jesse holds their feet to the fire by raising foreign and domestic issues they're afraid to discuss: corporate domination of the economy and the "defense" establishment's hold on foreign policy, for example. Even if the near-bankruptcy of American electoral politics doesn't excuse black charismatic excess, why hold the system's historical victims responsible for its actual redemption?

One inadequate yet widely accepted (because only partially conscious) answer, exposed and demolished in the Reed and the Landess and Quinn books, is that we do hold blacks peculiarly responsible precisely because they've been excluded from, and hence spared, the white world's subtle, routine corruptions. Many in the liberal media and the left, apparently unable to bear our society's sicknesses or its cures, do wish unconsciously for blacks to enter the public arena bearing more than rip-offs and rebellion. They are expected to bear a kind of salvation, a special reservoir of feeling and perception tapped in the folk wisdom and the searing moral force of a Martin Luther King, Jr. That is the root of the media's double standard for blacks, of its too-gentle treatment of Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition, on the one hand, but also, at the same time, of the journalists' "Hymietown" catharsis. For example, CBS reporter Bob Faw and the late *Los Angeles Times* reporter Nancy Skelton, two of the more sophisticated journalists to have covered Jackson, occasionally approximate a romance in a campaign account, *Thunder in America: The Improbable Presidential Campaign of Jesse Jackson* (Texas Monthly Press, $16.95, 256 pp.). Yet at other points, they seem to lunge into a harsher investigative treatment of Jackson's alleged reverse-racism and hence betrayal of whites on his staff.

Like King, of course, some blacks have indeed presented themselves in the public arena brilliantly, redemptively. Yet the white liberal expectation of black moral purity is profoundly unfair. It unwittingly presupposes continuing black separation — an intolerable burden whose moral and social costs more often involve the hustling of false messiahs than the heroism of a Martin Luther King. As the latter understood, any real transforming power wielded by blacks depends on their more prosaic integration into economic and civic life. Thus their "normal" aspirations, joined to those of other Americans, would put more pressure on the system for thoroughgoing change.

It may well be, as Jackson apologists claim, that only by consolidating an ethnic/racial power base in politics can blacks achieve integration in the long run. But if that's what Jackson's 1984 campaign was trying to do, it also set in motion forces more ominous. Reed and Landess and Quinn believe that its impact on true integration, on balance, has been negative. In striking the pose of black redeemer, they argue, Jackson has fanned the fires of black exceptionalism. He has deployed his rhetorical and self-promotional gifts to manipulate the unconscious messianic fantasies of the media and the left. Reed's subtly powerful analysis and Landess and Quinn's lively chronicle (which has been criticized for some sloppy reporting and claims to draw on an earlier profile of Jackson by Chicago reporter Barbara Reynolds) suggest that between Jackson's stardom and the slum conditions it exploits there lies a broad ground untilled or perhaps ravaged by his hustling.

However benignly Jackson's pyrotechnics may have been refracted on Fulton Street, then, these critics insist that from the moment in 1968 when he waved a bloodied shirt to support his fraudulent claim that King had died in his arms until the moment in 1984 when he bartered his weak Democratic Party platform demands for fifty minutes on the podium at the San Francisco convention, Jackson has betrayed the real interests of blacks. They show that he has often cozied up to Chicago's Daley machine against independent black candidates; to union-busting managements against worker boycotts; and even to Republicans, always in exchange for bright lights and microphones. And if all this prompts the suspicion that Jesse Jackson doesn't quite know who he is, there is little about these acrobatics to force him to a moment of truth; he has not even had to shed militant rhetoric, not even behind closed doors, to make these bargains. They are tacit, and he always keeps his end of them by distracting at the critical moment his followers' and possibly his own attention from real black interests in serious political reform, the restructuring of investment and employment, and so on.

For example, Jackson's "We Want It All!" cries at the start of Harold Washington's general election campaign for mayor of Chicago almost ruined the victory, as Landess and Quinn show in a strong chapter on that city's politics. Republicans were happy to have him around, while the word from a desperate Harold Washington camp was, "Get this brother *out of town!*" (That sentiment might well be echoed by the losing black congressional candidates Jackson flamboyantly backed

August Franza

Reagan Poem Five

I went to the Antipodes
in search of M. Thucydides
who'd tell me, as I bent my knees
to laud this man of histories,
the meaning of the mysteries
of Ronald Reagan's policies.

Thucydides then answered me
from the grave of ancient dust:
THE STRONG DO AS THEY WILL
AND THE WEAK DO AS THEY MUST.

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in primaries against Peter Rodino of Newark and the late Joseph Addabbo of Queens.) Consciously or not, Jackson seemed to sense that Harold Washington's victory would end his own prominence as David to the white machine's Goliath; the moment Washington did win, Jackson moved to South Carolina.

More important, by settling for the segregation of black demands from broader systemic agendas at critical moments in key political and economic struggles, Jackson has done his putative opponents substantial favors. Reed insists that his personal brokering of public patronage and corporate set-asides for blacks lets political clubhouses and corporations off the hooks where more disciplined interracial coalitions and campaigns are trying to hang them. The most infamous instance was the defection of Jackson's PUSH organization from a boycott of the Coors Breweries in exchange for some tokens for blacks. But even such tactics as Jackson's preaching of black self-reliance are seldom joined effectively to substantive reform agendas. Rather, too often his message fails to distinguish "self-discipline" from uncritical support of the corporate status quo. Rhetorically, Jackson is superb, but he never translates platitude into anything beyond token concessions, because his power is ultimately more personal than political.

Which is why Reed would rue the jubilation on Fulton Street, almost unequivocally, as bad politics. It might have therapeutic value, but it seduces blacks away from the hard work that builds political maturity. Jackson supporters may counter that the black elected officials and organizational spokesmen who oppose him are themselves beholden to "white power" and so even less effective with their compromises; Reed, a black political scientist at Yale, responds that it is Jackson who won't submit to black democratic ratification in any arena outside the purely symbolic presidential one, and that is why Jackson depends on the white media's indulgence of spectacle in order to keep afloat.

Reed thinks Jackson also trades on a black communal weakness for charismatic authoritarianism embodied in the personally certified "call" to ministry, which has so often foisted dubiously driven men upon gullible followers. Reed challenges the sentimental liberal notion that black churches were wellsprings of democratic civil rights action, noting that most preachers, accustomed to being big fishes in their small ponds, reacted very warily to the movement's broad-based initiatives, so disruptive of the Southern consensus within which they held their small sway. Though broader-gauged, Jackson's pulpit-thumping, no less than theirs, forecloses congregational dissent and eludes real tests of accountability; it leaves an inequitable and destructive national consensus untouched except by a rhetoric which exhausts its listeners more than it empowers them.

THIS BLACK communal weakness for charismatic authority, if real, might explain a difference in nuance between Jackson's and the Rev. Pat Robertson's campaigns. The genial, avuncular Robertson *sacralizes politics* by urging Christians to win elections for God, while Jackson *politicizes religion* by mobilizing the faithful toward a glory that somehow remains largely his own. Reed thinks this is especially costly to blacks, who need to learn to organize in a liberal polity based on disciplined brokerage of conflicting principles and interests. If Robertson erodes the liberal consensus among followers who may once have had intimations of it, Jackson forecloses its development in people who never had access to it in the first place, but might have it now. White flight from liberal complexity is thus reinforced by a black retreat from initiation into complexity, and vice-versa. What Richard John Neuhaus calls "the naked public square" — naked because denuded of its essential religious and moral mantle by secular, liberal log-rolling — becomes the *empty* public square devoid of citizens capable of practicing representative democracy, but invaded periodically by bands of religiously or racially charged voters who otherwise want none of its responsibilities.

That democratic complexity has little place in a "crusade" like Jackson's is amply illustrated in all three books. Landess and Quinn describe the withering censure and physical danger experienced by black reporter Barbara Reynolds in a crowded auditorium after Jackson excoriated her and others who'd betrayed the racial solidarity so critical to his success. (Two months ago, she pronounced her earlier criticisms 'outdated' and urged support for Jackson's current efforts to build the Rainbow Coalition.)

What do the critics want instead? Reed, a social democrat, wants vigorous black initiation into representative democracy, coupled with the organizing of interracial coalitions pressing for the jobs and social services without which, he feels, no society or polity can flourish. In a pivotal but, I fear, slightly wobbly chapter, he claims that a growing legion of black elected officials, which antedated and owed little to Jackson's come-lately voter-registration drives, had at least begun to introduce their constituencies to the practical arts of democratic representation until Jackson undermined them by playing to the old weakness for authority. Black politicians, ambivalent enough already about their modest gains in office, capitulated to Jackson's politics of moral posturing. They let their constituents mistake his rhetoric about jobs and health care for concrete progress toward winning them. Their failure of nerve set back the already hard, slogging march toward sustained, organized power in the service of a real political program. And it reinforced the black community's status as an exotic appendage to the polity, playing by special rules and inviting white condescension and indulgence.

Reed acknowledges the central problem with his own argument here: the record of black elected officials isn't exactly a

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study in democratic vitality. Too many are just like Jackson, long on rhetoric but short on organizational skill; others are subservient to or imitative of the worse white machines. Reed is really holding out for the ratificatory and educational *potential* in electoral processes as against Jackson's sheltered charlatanism, formally accountable to no one.

Another problem is that Reed's defense of accountability is itself so stilted in academic language that he risks becoming a foil for cheap shots from the Jackson camp, which will brand him an elitist. Too bad, for he is clearly a seasoned participant-observer in politics. His book began, he tells us, as an irate response to a panegyric on Jackson in the *Nation*. One wishes he'd continued arguing as if slamming a fist into his palm in impassioned but intelligent debate. Popularly written, this book might have hit black leaders hard; instead, its impact is sandbagged by its own language.

Fortunately two critical chapters, on the media and the left, shed some of the academic baggage. Reed shows that the media, by turns sentimental and cynical, gave blacks indulgence and condescension in abundance. The casually racist assumption that all ghetto politics is gutter politics fueled the media's need for a "top black" who could simplify that byzantine, impenetrable world, while escapist fantasies demanded a redeemer.

Journalists Faw and Skelton avoid the worst of these abuses. Their sections on anti-Semitism and the growing disillusionment of some of Jackson's closest white supporters and staff do look unflinchingly at the candidate's troubling and apparently unyielding resentments. But too often the writers flow with the romance of the campaign, washing away Jackson's blemishes simply by juxtaposing them with his strengths, a facile juggling of adjectives that passes for "balance" in so much network news entertainment.

IN FAIRNESS to the media, Jackson's supporters played to the journalists' need for a "top black" by making him the litmus test of white "respect" for all blacks. It wasn't only Louis Farrakhan who warned against "harming this brother"; Roger Wilkins declared that "giving respect to Jackson is symbolically giving respect to all blacks," thereby handing the media its cue.

That there is something potentially demeaning to blacks in this notion — that their standing rides on one man's treatment — is illustrated humorously in a Faw and Skelton anecdote. A congregation of mostly elderly black Texas churchgoers murmured unhappily throughout one of Jackson's speeches, mystifying the candidate and his aides, until it became clear that they felt he was getting second-class protection from Reagan because the Secret Service agents assigned to him all wore "hearing aids." Jackson doubled over with laughter when told what the consternation was about. But blacks' political immaturity and isolation were more ominously reflected — without benefit of correction from Jackson — when they misread U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young's dismissal after meeting with the PLO as an affront to all blacks. They couldn't see — nor would Jackson help them see — that rightly or not, *any*

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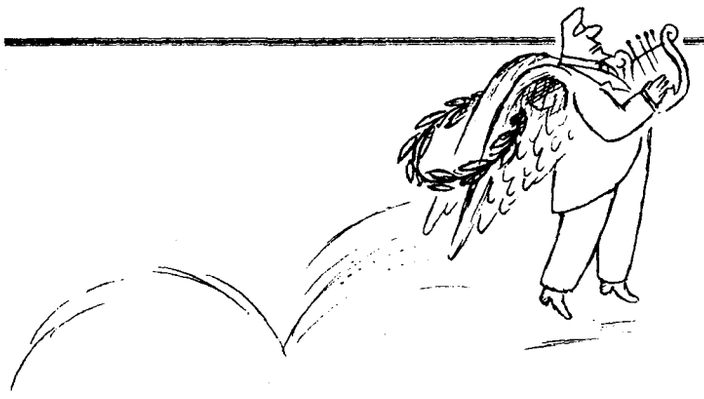
diplomat who'd done what Young had would have met the same fate. Landess and Quinn charge that the media acquiesced in many such misplaced black resentments (with a few notable exceptions like the *New York Times,* which did not hestitate to probe Jackson's murky PUSH operations).

But even more destructive and disingenuous than the media, Reed argues, was the left, and his analysis is devastating. Enchanted by Jackson's siren calls because given to anticipatory flutterings over every real or imagined stirring among "the masses," much of the left, with the notable exceptions of a few small publications and groups, was pathetically gulled by the media's own distortion of Jackson's opportunistic record and by television's "inability to distinguish between a social movement and a group of people shouting in a church." Left academics, hoping to put their ideas across, tried to insinuate themselves into this media chimera, which ended with little more than the four modest platform demands so readily scrapped by Jackson at the convention. A sad parody of a Faustian bargain for the professors, superior though it undoubtedly was to the famously low stakes of their own academic politics!

The real indictment of the left, Reed feels, is that in its infatuation with the symbolism of the presidential campaign it cared not a whit about the consequences of Jackson's charismatic hoo-hah for actual black political development. As Landess and Quinn argue in an extended and instructive comparison, Jackson's style often parallels that of white Southern populists like Theodore Bilbo and George Wallace. It relieves pent-up racist fears and resentments mainly by stroking them, catering to them with double messages that legitimate them even in seeming to transcend them. That drains the political nervous system of resilience in the long run by attenuating the practice of genuine interracial cooperation, ultimately undermining the populists' own crusade by failing to build on foundations of mutuality.

And perhaps that is Jesse Jackson's most serious problem. Given the PUSH record of bolting a broad-based boycott of the Coors Breweries several years ago in exchange for a few black franchises and sinecures gladly granted by management, and given the Rainbow Coalition's current unprincipled pandering to selected interest groups like independent oil producers, Jackson supporters on the left should be acutely embarrassed by the pointed dedication of Reed's book: "To the members of Local 34 and 35 of the Federation of University Employees [at Yale], who, while this book was being written, acted with great courage to advance a concrete vision of human dignity."

It is a measure of the seasoned dignity of Reed's argument that he doesn't stoop to underline "concrete." And a measure of the media's sentimental racism, the left's woozy desperation, and the black community's awful vulnerability that Reed's and Landess' and Quinn's arguments have yet to achieve the impact they deserve.



LUTHERANS TAKE A LEAP

Another kind of merger

MEL PIEHL

DENOMINATIONAL MERGERS generally constitute one of the less inspiring features of American church life. Amidst blizzards of paper and gales of rhetoric, two or more closely related church structures clumsily reshape themselves into one. This process is deeply absorbing to the church professionals involved, mildly interesting to observers and students of American religion, confusing to the folks in the pews, and largely a matter of indifference to the religious community at large, not to mention the world outside.

The decision this August of three Lutheran bodies to merge into one "new" church on January 1, 1988 — to be called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) — could turn out to be an exception, but probably won't. American Lutheranism contains religious energies and spiritual insights of great significance for American Christianity, but as Luther was wont to point out, the correlation between vital expressions of Christian faith and the more institutional manifestations of the church is not exactly one-to-one.

The merger of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) will, apart from cutting down on acronyms, both fulfill and frustrate the longtime dream of American Lutheran unity. It will fulfill it because the merger culminates the long historical process by which the numerous Lutheran bodies in the United States (at one time in the mid-nineteenth century there were over forty) have gradu-

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ally fused together. The ALC and the LCA were themselves the products of complex earlier mergers between different synods of Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, and others whose spaghetti-bowl connections and mergers can now only be understood by masochistic church historians.

This historical development reflects the fact that American Lutheranism, like American Catholicism, has evolved largely out of the great European immigrations to this country. The social and cultural history of American Lutheranism and Catholicism display many similarities, including ethnic diversity, the process of gradual assimilation to American life, and the apparent threats of various kinds of "Americanism" to religious tradition. But a fundamental difference is that Catholics faced these issues while standing under a single ecclesiastical umbrella, while Lutherans experienced their own institutional divisions as an additional obstacle to full participation in American religious life.

Lutheranism's longstanding institutional divisions also reflect, however, the much lower importance that issues of "external" church order and unity have often had in Lutheran tradition than in Catholicism. At its heart, Lutheranism has always been a spiritual or "confessing" movement that tries to uphold a particular vision of the Gospel. Everything else, including matters of church order, tends to be seen as peripheral, and hence subject to a wide variety of influences. If America is a nation with the soul of a church, then Lutheranism is a church with the soul of a monk.

Compared to the American Lutheran past, then, the ELCA represents a triumph of churchly unity, and can be celebrated on that ground alone. But the party will be somewhat dampened because of who isn't showing up: the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Missouri's absence virtually guarantees that the goal of complete Lutheran unity will be permanently frustrated, as the 5.3 million-member ELCA and the 2.7 million-member Missouri Synod polarize American Lutherans into two theologically disparate camps. (There is also a smaller conservative body, the Wisconsin Synod, closely aligned with Missouri.)

From the time of the 1839 "Saxon migration" to its "Zion on the Mississippi" in St. Louis, the Missouri Synod represented the most self-confident and self-contained traditions of German confessional Lutheranism. Tightly knit, institutionally rich, theologically intense, the Missouri Synod long stood proudly apart in semi-sectarian isolation from the rest of American Lutheranism, which it continually admonished for having fallen into various deviations from Luther's "pure doctrine." (Non-Lutherans deserved condemnation, not admonition.)

In the 1950s and the 1960s Missouri briefly emerged from this comfortable pattern, as the church leadership, prodded by a brilliant generation of theologians and scholars like Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Martin Marty, began to engage the Synod with the larger Lutheran and Christian worlds. The idea of pan-Lutheran union was in the air. But this bright bubble burst after 1969 when word went out to Missouri's hinterlands, via a cadre of grim Torquemadas (Midwest German edition) and ambitious church politicians, that Missouri's theologians were selling out the Synod's birthright of pure doctrine and Scriptural truth (i.e., old Missouri's rigid theology, now heavily laced with American fundamentalism) for a mess of "liberal" pottage.

The result was the Great Missouri Purge of the early seventies, in which self-proclaimed defenders of orthodoxy drove the "liberals" out of Concordia Seminary and Missouri's other Concordia colleges. (These Missouri "exiles" became the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches — one of the three merging bodies.) Since then Missouri's leadership has marched the Synod closer to the broader conservative evangelical Protestant camp, and the gap between Missouri and other Lutherans on a host of issues — from biblical criticism and ecumenism to, especially, women's ordination — has grown so great that reconciliation is unimaginable. While there is still a moderate minority among the Missouri Synod's members, the young pastors now graduating from the Concordia seminaries are extremely conservative. At Missouri's convention this summer, one seminary-sponsored resolution sought to declare that other Lutherans are no longer Lutheran, and another sought to force congregations to revoke women's right to vote, a privilege granted back in the liberal salad days. Both resolutions failed, but they suggest why American Lutheranism will likely remain divided.

WITH MISSOURI out of mind, if not quite out of sight, the new ELCA will be the dominant voice of American Lutheranism. But whether the ELCA becomes a vital new expression of Lutheran Christianity or simply a ho-hum reshuffling of its bureaucratic parts is very much a question, not least for those who are becoming part of it.

Since it joins the small but influential band of AELC "exiles" and their Christ Seminary-Seminex with the two larger bodies' seminaries and academic traditions, the ELCA will include almost all the theologically sophisticated Lutheran intellectuals who write books and articles, publish newsletters, and represent the Lutheran tradition in ecumenical dialogues and other forums. But the church merger process has provided a sharp reminder, if anyone needed reminding, that the church as embodied in a given human community of believers is always considerably more (or considerably less) than any theological or confessional statement proclaims it to be. The dynamics of the merger process highlighted the cultural and historical peculiarities of these 5.3 million American Lutherans as often as it displayed Lutheranism as "a confession movement within the one holy catholic church," as the theologians love to describe it.

Lutherans' quirks and warts were so visible partly because the whole merger negotiation has been courageously carried out in public, with everyone free to kibitz and criticize. While formal theological disagreements among the merging bodies were few, there were substantial differences of piety and ecclesiology that were all the harder to deal with for often being invisibly rooted in cherished ethnic-religious traditions. The ALC, heavily concentrated among Germans and Norwegians in the upper Midwest, tends to be pietistic, democratic,

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lay-oriented, congregational, and non-liturgical. While not exactly anti-theological, the average ALC pastor or parishioner considers doctrinal concerns as settled long ago by Luther and safely ensconced in the catechism. The LCA, stronger in urban areas and in the older "American Lutheran" regions of Pennsylvania and Ohio, tends to be more hierarchical, liturgical, clerical, theological, and ecumenical, at least among its visible leadership.

Many of the merger issues, including sticky questions of polity and ministry that were settled only at the last minute, essentially involved these different church styles. But the most interesting issues — church headquarters, quotas, and the ecumenical direction of the new ELCA — also involved something else: Lutherans' struggle to define their identity and their role within American Christianity and society.

The church headquarters issue was both the silliest and most symbolically important because it reflected Lutherans' uncertainty about who they are, or ought to be, in the larger world, as well as carrying the emotional freight of the merging church bodies' competing self-images. Many Lutherans in the rural and small-city Midwest harbor a suspicion of alleged Eastern Lutheran sophistication and cosmopolitanism, while some Eastern Lutherans, including the LCA bureaucracy headquartered in New York, feel an equal distaste for the alleged dullness, parochialism, and ethnic pietism of much Midwestern Lutheranism. A smaller-city headquarters in the Lutheran heartland would supposedly symbolize Lutherans' self-containment, while a cosmopolitan metropolis would symbolize their intention to act on a larger stage.

Torn between heartland Minneapolis and cosmopolitan Chicago, the merger committee came up with a surprise compromise: Milwaukee. LCA churchmen, who had barely reconciled themselves to exile in the wilds of Chicago, were shocked. Milwaukee? Sauerkraut! Bratwurst! Beer! Everything that an up-to-date and ecumenized American Lutheranism was supposedly putting behind it! Complaints flowed in: Milwaukee's symphony and museums were third-rate, and the airport connections even worse. One LCA bishop said, "I've been there three times, twice in the wintertime, and I could hardly get out . . ." And another observed that "I don't necessarily see Milwaukee as the kind of key city where activities take place."

(One imagines a first-century council deciding on church headquarters:

ST. JAMES: So why not Jerusalem? We save on moving costs and stay close to the grassroots.

ST. PAUL: Too provincial. Too ethnic! I keep telling you, if this church is ever going to amount to anything, we've got to stop looking like we just emerged from a kosher deli.

ST. PETER: Besides, the roads into the place are awful and the theater is laughable. Are you going to tell some delegate from Corinth or Alexandria that he's got to spend three days getting to a council in Podunk? I say, go where the action is, where all roads lead to . . .)

Taken aback by the objections, the merger committee reversed itself and recommended Chicago, and the choice was narrowly upheld in the August conventions. The headquarters issue seems trivial in itself (although perhaps the location of headquarters could affect a church body in some ways). But the discussion reflected popular Lutheranism's concern about the meaning of its supposed "emergence" from provincial and ethnic traditions, and its doubts about its future identity and course.

SIMILAR concerns have also appeared in the debate over quotas. Proclaiming that the new church should be "inclusive," the merger committee has proposed that all boards, agencies, staffs, and policymaking conventions of the ELCA must include 60 percent lay people, that at least one-half of these must be female, and that 10 percent must be "persons of color or whose primary language is other than English." This has naturally aroused sharp controversy, with critics contending that quotas will politicize the church and alienate people in the parishes from the leadership. Some see the minority quota as especially artificial and distorting, since only about 2 percent of ELCA members are minorities. The defenders of quotas respond that this is precisely why quotas are needed, and that promoting minority leaders will encourage greater Lutheran mission among Blacks, Hispanics, and Indians.

The most articulate objections to quotas come from some of those theologians who have vigorously promoted the recovery of Lutheranism's catholic confessional heritage. For them, the quota proposal is symptomatic of the whole merger operation's failure to think in a truly catholic rather than denominational way about the church. Writing in the Lutheran theological journal *Dialog*, Carl Braaten asserts that "the governance and leadership of the church shall not be dictated by the categories Christ has made obsolete in the Kingdom of God, but rather by discerning the gifts which the Spirit so generously distributes among the people without regard to such distinctions." And Robert Jenson complains that "those to be 'included' are exclusively ethnic and class-defined factions within American society. Moreover, it is not the *church* they are to be included in, but the power structure of the new Lutheran denomination." Jenson also argues that quotas will confirm rather than overcome Lutherans' parochialism.

> There are indeed few Black or Hispanic — or Thai or Bulgar or . . . — bishops in North American Lutheranism; and that will most assuredly continue to be the case for just so long as we keep rebuilding a North American Lutheran denomination, however many bureaucrats we appoint in charge of minority recruitment. If we uptight Germans are rightly alarmed about the deprivations these lacks impose on us, we might remember that in the Roman Catholic and Pentecostal and Eastern communions there will be lots of such bishops, and draw the obvious conclusion.

Those favoring the quotas respond that the church as the spiritual body of Christ may be freely governed by the Gospel without regard to sexual or racial distinctions, but the church as human institution has so far pretty well managed to avoid

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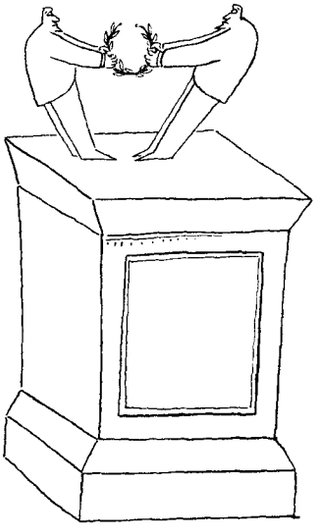
living out the meaning of Galatians 3:28. The quotas, they say, do not apply to the church's divine essence, where these distinctions do not matter, but only to its humanly established institutional structures, where they obviously do. By requiring participation of those previously excluded from ecclesiastical structures, quotas will serve as a goad to the church to live by its Gospel professions. A lay defender of the quotas, Andrew Bouman, contends that "what seems 'legalistic' to persons who enjoy the rights and privileges of the dominant community may be 'good news' to the persons who have experienced discrimination." So far, the quotas remain part of the proposed charter of the ELCA, but they will certainly be debated again at the constituting ELCA convention in April 1987.

The quota issue is only one indication that Lutheranism is no longer immune to the divisive effects of political controversies over war, sexuality, and a host of other matters. To both the traditionally pious folk in the pews and some of the intellectual guardians of Lutheran orthodoxy, this represents a new threat to the church and to Luther's "Two-Kingdom" theology, which has traditionally justified Lutheran quietism on political and social matters. Some theologians fret that the growing influence of social-issue groups in the ELCA merger committee and within the church bureaucracy reflects the tendency in activist Lutheran quarters to regard the church as just another base for liberal politicking. Such arguments still carry weight with the many Lutherans whose piety and theology resist church involvement in controversial political questions, and they are bolstered by neoconservatives whose objections to the church's taking political stands seem to rise in direct proportion to the degree of disagreement with their own politics. But more and more Lutherans have discovered good Lutheran and biblical reasons for the church to take political positions on such issues as Central America, nuclear war, or the farm crisis (where rurally-based Lutherans have been especially thoughtful and effective).

A final critical issue for ELCA Lutheranism concerns its ecumenical self-understandings and future relations with the rest of Christianity. Again, this involves a tension between some theologians' lofty view of Lutheranism as a confessional movement within catholic Christianity, and the practical evolution of Lutheranism as another Protestant denomination in North America. For such ecumenically minded theologians as George Lindbeck, Richard John Neuhaus, and Carl Braaten, there is no reason to form the ELCA unless it represents a vigorous confessional witness and movement toward restoring the unity of the church broken in the sixteenth century.



As a practical matter, this means giving high priority to relations with Roman Catholics, with the clear goal of achieving some sort of new relationship between worldwide Lutheranism and Catholicism. These theologians emphasize that the American and international Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogues have already achieved sufficient doctrinal agreement to make ecclesial reunion thinkable in the not too distant future. The international dialogue has even suggested some clever strategies for overcoming such divisive matters as the Lutheran bishops' lack of apostolic succession (by Catholic standards). For such ecumenists as Neuhaus, Lutherans are ideally positioned to serve as a crucial bridge between Catholics and Protestants: "In the larger picture of ecclesial reconciliation," he says, "Lutheranism has a most particular opportunity, responsibility, and destiny to heal the breach of the sixteenth century between the Reformation and Rome. . . . In this way we Lutherans also make our greatest ecumenical contribution to all who share the Reformation heritage."

But this catholic tendency within Lutheranism remains largely confined to rarefied theological circles, remote from the ordinary world of American Lutheranism. While most Lutherans feel good will toward American Catholics, there are still plenty who fear Rome, if not Catholicism, and even more who feel more comfortable with mainline American Protestantism than with Catholicism, no matter what the theologians say about the Eucharist or other matters.

This protestantizing inclination showed up on the eve of the merger in the controversial decision of the ALC presiding bishop, David Preus, to seek pulpit-and-altar fellowship with two Reformed denominations (the Presbyterians and Reformed Church in America) — a move that many Lutheran theologians considered incompatible with further reconciliation with Rome. The new ELCA will have to reconsider this matter for itself. But for the ecumenical Lutheran confessionalists, the establishment of the ELCA as just another mainline Protestant denomination, rather than a dynamic new force within American Christianity, would confirm the sub-Lutheran quality of the merger. In that case, ELCA would not be an expression of Lutheranism's religious vision, but rather "the perfect and monogamous marriage of LCA curialism and ALC low church pietism" and "the perfect union of headquarters and religious individualism."

Others, however, who also have an ecumenical vision, recognize that as a practical matter the ELCA will have plenty to do getting its own house in order, without taking further controversial ecumenical steps in the near future. They also point out that even if establishing a relationship with Lutheranism were high on Catholicism's agenda — a dubious propo-

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sition — Rome would not look any more favorably on the Lutheran ordination of women (to be followed soon by female bishops) than does the Missouri Synod.

The speculative discussions about such matters might at least raise the same question for other Christians that have arisen for some Lutherans during the merger process. Is involvement with these messy ecclesiastical issues the way for Christians to be spending their time as they enter the twenty-first century? Energy devoted to internal church concerns seems to detract from the urgent tasks of living the Gospel in a world threatened by war and poverty. Focus on churchy matters offers new excuses for the already rampant complacency and narrow preoccupations of many church people. Especially in America, active Christians have worked out plenty of ways to practice their faith across "denominational" lines, and that practice often creates more real unity than trying to resolve the secondary issues that preoccupy the institutional guardians of ecclesiastical order.

But it can be argued with equal force that practical cooperation is continually limited and threatened by the still-real religious divisions among us, and that the substitution of practical or "spiritual" cooperation for the visible unity of the church leads, eventually, to a loss of full religious motivation for social action or any other venture. Perhaps only by making the difficult effort to fulfill Christ's call in John 17 will Christians realize what they have been missing by being separated from one another and create a truly effective witness to the world, especially in our religion-drenched but spiritually impoverished America. If the Lutheran merger proves to be even a small step in that direction, it will be worthwhile.

Screen

AUTUMN FILMS

A HARVEST FESTIVAL

FALL FILMS come and go like foliage. Everything seems lighted in bright, alluring reds and oranges — name directors, famous international stars, "adult" themes. One is almost bedazzled by the forest of ads each day in the newspaper, and the cornucopia of critical raves each film garners. Many of these acclaimed films are spectacularly promoted through prestige festivals in Toronto, Boston, and the venerably pop New York Lincoln Center extravaganza.

Nevertheless, most of the films at such festivals are not worth seeing, and will hardly last the autumn. Highlights included the opening features in New York (*Down By Law*) and the closing (*Peggy Sue Got Married*); in between came the marvelous *Therese*, a study of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, which will not be released until December. Other good foreign films include *Rouge Baiser*, which was only shown at the Boston festival and has been held back from release until now, when, like a single red maple leaf on an increasingly bare tree, it can get some focused attention.

Cactus, with Isabelle Huppert, suffers from benign neglect at the hand of its director, Paul Cox. Huppert is injured in a car accident, which forces her to choose between losing one eye or going blind in both. Her choice is affected by the presence of a blind artist (Peter Menzies) all too handy for plot purposes. Cox seems too embarrassed by his story to tell it straightforwardly, but his detours are fruitless. The Australian scenery is beautiful, and affectingly linked to blindness, but like other elements in the film its use never jells with the plot. Like *Children of a Lesser God*, *Cactus* is an intelligent, noble attempt to focus on a handicap, but has even less commitment to the subject.

Police and *Ménage* star the tall, angular, massive Gerrard Depardieu, the unforgettably lovable faker of *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Depardieu never seems to stand still; rather, he lets his weight tower over you, almost veering toward the camera from the slope of his long, spindly nose to the base of his six-foot frame. As a result, he is perfect for roles involving a kind of awkwardly sweet menace, and he has two here. In the first, he plays a cop in the standard type of French crime thriller, in which moral distinctions between police and criminals are increasingly obscured. In the second, he plays a homosexual petty criminal who seduces a couple (including Cannes Best Actor award winner Michel Blanc and Miou-Miou) and reduces their life to farce. Both films, however, are too mechanically amoral, especially *Ménage* which director Bertrand Blier has structured mainly to shock.

Round Midnight is a painfully slow tribute to jazz in 1959 Paris by Bertrand Tavernier. The director is usually a master of understatement, but this time it masters him. The plot concerns an elderly and alcoholic black musician (played by saxophonist Dexter Gordon), a Parisian admirer (François Cluozot), and the young daughter this Frenchman neglects in his near idolatry. As in his magnificent *A Sunday in the Country*, Tavernier is drawn to the subject of the aging artist, and here displays keen enthusiasm for the 1950s Parisian jazz craze in recreating "The Blue Note" club, filled with real jazz notables such as Herbie Hancock, who also composed much of the film's music. But no one not madly in love with jazz can bear the monotonous first hour of performances in the distinctly unfriendly medium of film. *Round Midnight* is an insider film with little attempt made to draw outsiders in. Many who like this film call it "elegaic"; I call it dead.

ROUGE BAISER (or *Red Kiss*) places jazz in a more lively fifties context. An autobiographical film by French writer, director, producer Vera Belmont, it reminds one of Diane Kurys's 1983 hit *Entre Nous*. But Belmont has a tale to tell,

Give Commonweal for Christmas

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rather than an axe to grind, and *Red Kiss* is free of the desire to punish men and free of the disguised anti-Semitism that marred Kurys's work. Belmont shares Kurys's sparkling photographic realism, rapid anecdotal style, and the same fascination with the immediate postwar period when both grew up. But Belmont focuses on the era's political complexities, not the inability of (Jewish) men to satisfy glamorous women.

Belmont's film centers on Nadia (Charlotte Valandrey), whose story is in turn framed by her mother's (Martha Keller). Indeed, a pre-war prelude establishes a mystery, as Keller is seen bidding goodbye to Moishe, an immigrant Jewish Communist fleeing to Moscow. Their scenes are shot in black and white; watching their goodbye at a rail station, I almost felt they resembled Bogart and Bergman's Rick and Ilsa in *Casablanca*. In one touch of hand to mouth, Keller catches much of the anguish of that era of forced departure, exile, extermination. Belmont uses her simple, understated gesture poignantly, then quickly cuts to the 1950s, with Keller married to a different man, now the mother of Nadia and a younger daughter.

Nadia, fifteen, is caught between her inherited leftist sympathies and an irrepressibly mischievous attraction to Scarlett O'Hara, Rita Hayworth movies, and Coca-Cola. Belmont vividly, half-sympathetically, recreates the mood of French Communists, especially Jews, who revered Stalin as their savior from Hitler. But at an anti-American demonstration, Nadia is beaten by the police, then saved by an apolitical, amoral photographer (Lambert Wilson), whom she loathes, tries to convert, then comes to love. When Moishe returns with tales of Stalinist anti-Semitism in the "white bear country" of Siberia, Nadia gets even more confused.

Belmont deals affectionately but ironically with the explosive mixture of ideology and hormones. Nadia doesn't rebel entirely against her background, and takes seriously her expulsion from a youth club of the party (for loving a "reactionary"). But when she realizes what prigs the Communist youth are, she flamboyantly begins an anti-Stalinist striptease on their dias.

Belmont also nicely balances Nadia's journey up from radicalism with a deeper understanding of her family's history. The director deals her plot cards so deftly that one hardly notices how sensational are the "discoveries" at the end, when, as in any true romance, the fairy princess must discover her real father. Valandrey carries her multifaceted role with charm, preciosity, and an admirably sultry resolution to find her own way in life. She is billed as a "Bardot who thinks," and is never better than in her Rita Hayworth imitation — a half-camp, half-serpent-of-the Nile seduction.

Red Kiss redeems "coming of age" films from contemporary Hollywood clonings. It dares to treat youth not as a condition in isolation from the real world but in engagement with key issues like belief, racism, heritage, immigration, femininity. Scenes in smoky Parisian clubs echo Woody Allen's use of jazz as a sign of bygone grace. But if *Red Kiss* is nostalgic, its vision of the fifties is tough, complicated, and only slow to find peace.

TOM O'BRIEN

Media

'GOD & MONEY'

AUDITING THE ECONOMIC PASTORAL

IN ORDER to appreciate the documentary "God and Money" — a film based on the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy — one has to acknowledge the problems faced by its producers, John Coney, John de Graaf, and Bette Jean Bullert.

The purpose of the hour-long documentary, which airs on public television Sunday evening, November 9, is to set out the major themes of the pastoral letter for an audience even broader than the spectrum represented by the U.S. Catholic population itself. The filmmakers seized the visual possibilities of the subject and wisely refrained from sledgehammering the viewer with scenes of economic misery, American-style. Instead, they chose to present actual examples of what the church is now doing — with a healthy and encouraging dose of lay leadership — to serve the poor. The film suggests that the church models what it preaches to the rest of society, and particularly to the government: an active concern for the poor and the unemployed, for distributive justice in a land of plenty.

The most moving scenes show projects funded by the Campaign for Human Development (CHD). Through CHD help a small group of independent lobstermen, who nearly lost their businesses, forms a successful cooperative in the Boston archdiocese. A lobbying group in Minnesota works for a moratorium on farm foreclosures. Most impressive of all, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) — an organization composed largely of Hispanics in San Antonio — has improved the safety, physical appearance, and access to city services in their community by learning how, as citizens, to participate effectively in government.

But all of these scenes, inspiring as they are, are presented at the expense of other, more fundamental, implications of the pastoral concerning capitalism as an economic system.

Not only does each each project represent a tiny effort — slightly reminiscent of the 1960s — uncharacteristic of what most Americans and most Catholics will ever be engaged in, even taken together they still fail to address a number of the objections raised to the pastoral by legitimate challengers, some of whom make succinct dissenting remarks in the film. The question that needs to be answered more fully in the film is: Whose responsibility is it to alleviate the pain of economically disenfranchised groups? Is it the church's? Private voluntary associations'? Individuals'? The government's?

The bishops say, unequivocally, that while it is the responsibility of all these groups, Catholic social teaching includes an important and positive role for government. Yet the emphasis

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in the film, on small self-help projects sponsored by the church, may confuse this issue of governmental responsibility, as well as allied issues of *systemic* change, even though Archbishop Rembert Weakland peers into the camera to say: ". . . it would seem that there is a kind of constant tension between capitalism and Christianity if you conceive of capitalism as based on personal greed. I don't want to see it that way. I think we have to inject into that system now the kind of unselfishness that will help us to all float in the boat together."

What a viewer of the film can learn about the pastoral letter is the bishops' primary interest: the need to make our economic system address the deprivations of the poor and unemployed. The film may certainly increase the viewer's concern for those the system has overlooked, and may even motivate some to join organizations similar to those presented here. A worthy achievement.

Yet the letter has a wealth of other points to make, and it makes them with a degree of sophistication and nuance not evident in the film. For that reason, even the weaknesses of the documentary — its simplistic rendering of the controversy surrounding the pastoral, and its unintentional obscuring of the government's rightful role in providing for those without life's necessities — should send viewers hammering on the parish office door for the final, forthcoming document, so they can read it themselves, then discuss it with others. As that kind of introductory tool, the film serves a worthwhile purpose.

(It is available in tape, film, and video for rent or purchase from California Newsreel; 630 Natoma St., San Francisco, CA 94013.)

KAREN SUE SMITH

Books: IDEAS OF CONSEQUENCE

FEAST OF LOVE
POPE JOHN PAUL II
ON HUMAN INTIMACY
Mary G. Durkin
Loyola University, $9.95, 248 pp.

Sebastian Moore

IN what is surely a labor of love, Mary Durkin sets before us, in a beautifully clear and readable form, the meditations of Pope John Paul II on the first chapters of Genesis that formed the content of a year's weekly public audiences. The Pope's text is not given but paraphrased, each section being accompanied with an excellent summary and a valuable spiritual reflection by Mary Durkin.

It is not possible in the space of a review to do justice to the wealth of spiritual insight that the book contains. I have chosen, rather, to bring the whole work to a certain focus, where I find it fascinatingly problematic.

The fundamental idea behind these talks is that the first three chapters of Genesis, heard with faith, offer a perspective on sexuality that is far wider and deeper than that to which we are accustomed. Further, there is a theological reason why we are accustomed to the narrower view with all the conflicts and contradictions it engenders: the Fall.

What the Fall means, according to Pope John Paul, is that we are very poorly in touch with our sexuality as it truly is, as it images the creating Godhead. To get a glimpse of this true perspective, we have to consider what the story is telling us, first, about the deep existential solitude of the human being, which calls us into "partnership with the Absolute," and which reveals the partnership of man and woman as a sharing in this aloneness and partnership with God. Adam's ecstatic cry on seeing the woman, "Behold, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!" is a prelude to the Song of Songs. Of this sublime condition, of intimacy in God, sexual union is the expression. But the pope stresses with what great difficulty this full meaning of sexuality is realized in our present, fallen condition.

The question I would raise is this: how do we know when we *are* realizing this intimacy with God? In other words, what *is* this full sexual experience? Is there anything *in sex as we know it*, "fallen" though it is, that evidences the beauty of sexual union as a covenantal expression? Or is there only the *idea* of a divinely shaped union *of* which our sexual experience is the always deficient expression?

I keep getting the feeling, reading these profound reflections, that their papal author does not believe that there *is* any clue to the sublime reality in sexual experience itself. In reflection on one's body in its maleness or femaleness, its essential incompleteness, yes; in the mysteriousness of the union of two in one flesh, yes. But in *sex*, in a roll in the hay (Okay, on a honeymoon!)? Somehow, no. That never comes through. This is a phenomenology of sexuality descriptive in its intention. But we are light years away from the world of D.H. Lawrence. I mean that there is no feeling for that area of experience for which Lawrence has found such memorable words.

Wondering why this was so, and seeking clues in this dense text, I came upon something that I believe may be the clue. It occurs, not surprisingly, where the moment of the Fall is being explored. John Paul's interpretation of this moment is very traditional. The result of disobedience to God is that the harmony, in the human being, between the "higher" and the "lower" nature is lost. It is in the treatment of this lost harmony that I find the clue I have been seeking.

A loss of harmony may — and must, if we are to avoid a fatal distortion — be considered both as a failure of the "lower" to obey the "higher" *and* as a failure of the "higher" to befriend the "lower." But it is only the failure of the "lower" to obey that is considered. For what happens in John Paul's account is that they eat the fruit, that is, disobey God, and as a result experience the lustful rebellion of their lower nature, *as a*

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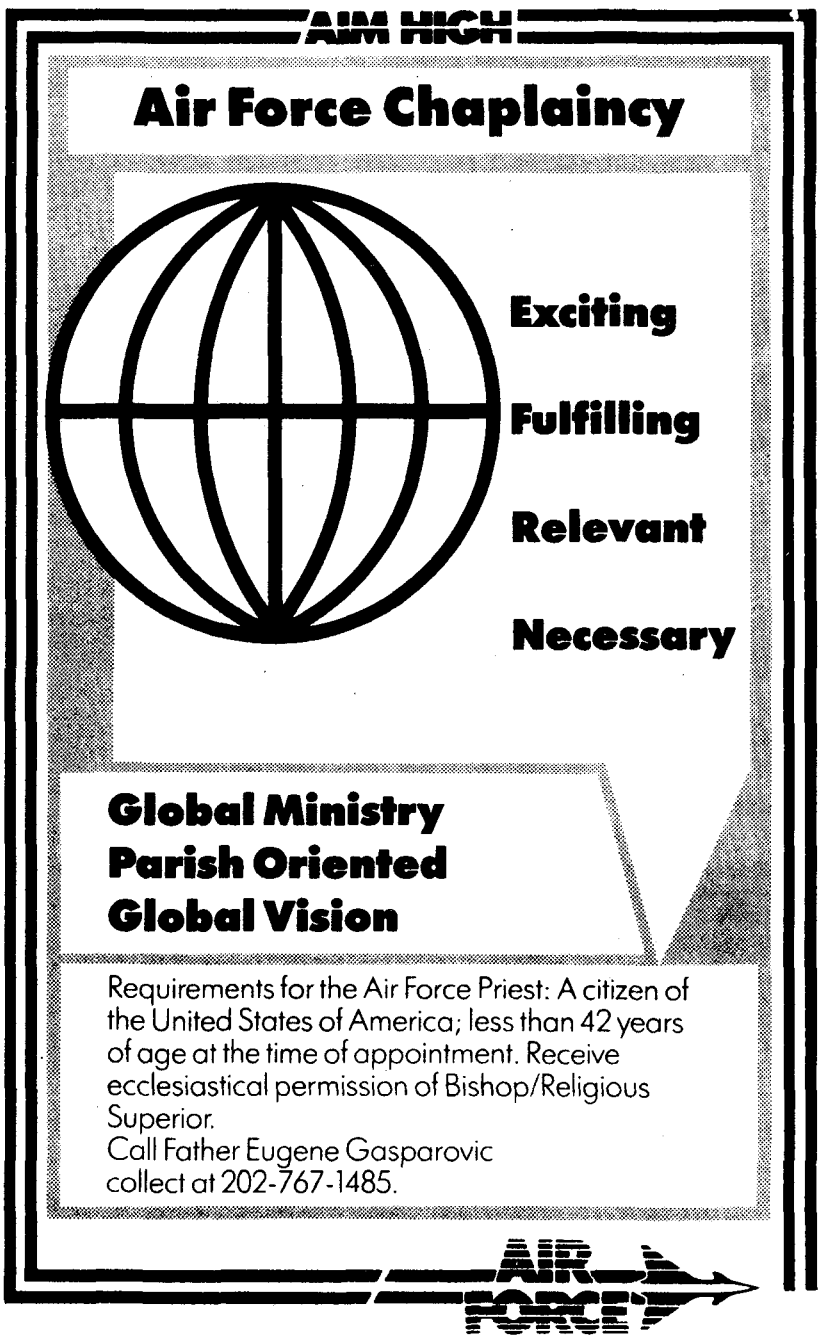
result of which experience they are filled with shame and cover their sexual organs.

The Genesis story, on the other hand, features the corresponding failure of the "higher" to befriend the "lower." In fact, it makes *this* failure the key to the whole thing. They eat the fruit, and "immediately their eyes were opened, and they saw that they were naked." Ironically, the jumped-up god whom the serpent has duped finds the evidence of his/her animality embarrassing. The thematic connection between shame and the act of disobedience is made no less than three times in the narrative. This hubris-inspired embarrassment at being sexual is one experience of the fallen condition. Certainly the "lower nature," *thus outlawed,* gets its own back by behaving lawlessly — and this is lust. In other words, it is shame that generates lust. In the pope's account, it is the other way round: lust generates shame. He insists that "man is ashamed of his body because of lust."

This idea has serious consequences. Shame emerges as an appropriate reaction to the disorder of lust, whereas in the biblical account shame is how sexuality looks *to the human pretending to be God;* it is looking down on sexuality that is the immediate effect of disobeying God. What disappears from the account of original sin when we follow the pope's order of "shame because of lust," is the notion of sin *consisting in contempt for the flesh*. What is lost to view is that a failure to honor sexual union as an experience succumbs to the hubris of original sin. Much of traditional Catholic thinking on sexuality falls into this trap. The "sex, ugh!" of the fallen Adam becomes the "sex, ugh!" of the church.

These profound meditations are seeking in the Genesis account a deeper and truer perspective on sex. Yet at the crucial point where the Fall is dramatized as involving a subtle disesteem of our sexual experience, the implication is missed. What the biblical text is saying to us here is not "Sexual experience is not what God meant it to be" but "Beware of down-grading sex in your quest for God. Beware of neo-platonism. It is not quite Christian."

One of the most significant moments at Vatican II was when the imperative of attention to people's sexual experience as an indispensable unitive value in the human community was thrust upon the representatives of a two-thousand-year-old celibate tradition — when, in other words, the above implication of the story of the Fall became operative in the council's collective mind. The context was the debate on birth control. *Could* the value enshrined in sexual union be made subservient to a very rigid and long unquestioned understanding of natural law? Patriarch Maximos suggested that church authority suffered from a "bachelor psychosis." Cardinal Suenens warned the Fathers that we might, if we persisted in the traditional attitude to contraception, have another Galileo case on our hands, which might be one too many. And Charles Davis, a peritus at the council, told the press that evening, "Today, my role as a theologian changed."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The plunge was not taken. The birth control question was taken out of the council's hands and given to a papal commission, whose virtually unanimous vote for change was ignored. And *Humanae Vitae* reiterated the ban on contraception, causing — it has been sociologically demonstrated — a far greater exodus of people from the American church than any other single factor. Nearly all the national hierarchies, in their pastoral epilogues, tried to give to the judgment of the married a crucial role. Bishop Butler said to me at the time, "What it comes down to is that the hierarchies are protecting their flocks from the pope!"

This is not a digression. It is necessary to set the work under review in the context of recent church history. With this behind us, let me sum up my critique, and then set that in this wider context.

In sum, the reason why the pope's biblical mirror to sexuality does not show sexual experience as we know it, fallen though we are, as valid and revelatory of God, is that where the biblical text shows our fallenness to consist in a downgrading of sexual experience, the pope does not follow the text. On the contrary, by inverting the text's order of shame and lust, he gets *from the text* a downgrading of sexual experience. He sees the downgrading of sexual experience as *justified,* by the fact of the Fall, whereas this downgrading *is* the Fall in its immediate effect. In short, he reads the text as justifying the attitude which the text is telling us we must deplore.

I am not saying we can undo the Fall. I am saying that we have to learn from it, and that we do not learn from it by promoting the very attitude of shame at sex that results from the Fall. A correct reading of the text will demote, not promote, this attitude. Of course sexual shame is part and parcel of our condition. But a theology that fails to see further than this is not faithful to the "oracles of God."

And I am not saying that any old roll in the hay is revelatory of God. I am saying that where sexual experience *is* so revelatory, it is so in the delightful way in which it happens. This is the crux, of course. Whenever the Vatican talks of sex, it never seems to have in mind what people experience as sex, what they experience sex as. The gulf is always there. It was very nearly bridged at that historic moment during Vatican II, to which I have referred.

It is because his interpretation of Genesis reinstates, reestablishes this gulf between the sexual reality and sexual theologizing, that the present pope has felt able to reverse the trend that followed *Humanae Vitae*, namely the benign attitude of national hierarchies to contraception, which has been authority's way of admitting, at last, the laity's experience as crucial in this whole affair. The sharp difference between the tone of Pius XI's *Casti Connubii* (1930) and that of the national hierarchies following the birth control encyclical has not been sufficiently marked. It must be recalled, now that the supreme authority seems to be recovering the confidence of *Casti Connubii*. To anyone who is wondering how this can happen, I would commend a close study of Mary Durkin's profound work.

Tasting the terrible sweetness

EIGHTEEN POEMS

Thomas Merton
New Directions, $200, Limited Edition, Unfolioed

Paul Wilkes

OLDER MEN have been attracted to younger women before, patients to their nurses. Poems have been written about the kindling of love in a firebox unused to such heat. But when the older man, a patient, falls in love with his nurse, and happens to be a cloistered Trappist monk, and additionally one of the spiritual giants of our time, such poems certainly take on an added significance.

The true love of his life appeared at about the time Thomas Merton was celebrating his twenty-fifth year as a Trappist, and to him it was apparently as overwhelming as perhaps — and such postulation is foolish at best — any mystical experience or sublime insight he received in his lifetime.

And, as he did with every other turn in his life, this time surely risking scorn and much worse, Merton was brave enough to write about it and want it public.

Merton grew and changed incredibly during his years at Gethsemani — from the ardent arch-Catholic of *The Seven Storey Mountain* to the questioning and angry activist of *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* to the Buddhist proselyte of his *Asian Journal* — causing both his admirers and detractors, upon opening his latest book, to see a "new Merton." Indeed, the demands of his own mind and spirit required a continual examination of conscience and when old answers no longer measured up, Merton was not one to hold onto them very long.

And so we have this beautifully published, quite limited edition of poems, most of them written to or about "M.," a student nurse he met while hospitalized for a painful neck problem. At risk of using the rubber stamp once more: we have still another "new Merton."

The poems were written in 1966 and entrusted to his longtime friend and New Directions publisher, James Laughlin, with the request that they would be published after the author's death. A gap of some eighteen years between writing and publication is fortuitous. Such a book too soon after Merton's death would have certainly blunted the impact of his other works. Now, it shows even more vividly that this was a man who never escaped his human nature while seeking the divine.

REVIEWERS

SEBASTIAN MOORE, O.S.B. *teaches theology at Boston College. His latest book is* Let This Mind Be In You *(Seabury).*

PAUL WILKES, *the author of* Merton By Those Who Knew Him Best, *was the writer, director, and co-producer of the PBS documentary,* Merton.

WILLIAM H. SLAVICK *is a Benedictine oblate who teaches at the University of Southern Maine.*

ROBERT D. HOLSWORTH *is an associate professor in the political science department at Virginia Commonwealth University.*

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Eighteen Poems has a narrative drive all its own, the story of a man who, in its early pages, writes only half capriciously "Because I am always broken I obey my nurse," and goes on to find that she is the center of his life:

For another day in which I can
Again breathe, work a little,
Write something
(If I write for you
I can write something)
Try to exist
(If I am yours
I can exist)
Even though I am at war with my
own heart.

This "war," the obvious conflict between remaining a monk or marrying this young woman is, as might be expected of Merton, not the major theme of these poems. He was not a whiner or complainer. When he dove into something, be it contemplation or chopping wood or studying Sufism, he went at it with great gusto. At mid point in the poems, he tells of a dream in which Father John of the Cross says, "Now many priests will tell lies in order to marry" but concludes,

But when did such knowledge
Ever make anybody happy?

And that's that. No, the theme of *Eighteen Poems* is not painful soul searching, but the roller coaster of love; God is only mentioned in the vein of "thank God we have each other, our love, a sunrise."

Merton, at the age of fifty-one, was plainly stricken, and in the poems he is alternately eloquent;

We with tender liturgy
And tears
Of the newborn
Celebrate the first creation
Of solemn love
Now for the first time forever
Made by God in these
Four wet eyes and cool lips
And worshipping hands

Erotic:

I cling to the round hull
Of your hips and cry
Lend me for God's love
Your lifeboat
Your saving body

Overwhelmed:

So the lovers teach April stars
To riot rebel and follow faithless
courses
And it doesn't matter
The seed is not afraid
Of winter or the terrible sweetness
Of spring's convivial nightmare
Or the hot surprise and dizzy spark
Of their electric promise.

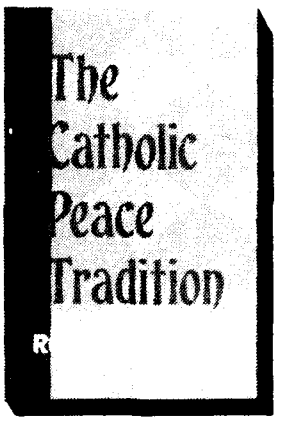
A little jejune:

It is midnight
You have come
Bringing the truth I need
You stand over my hell
I wake with a cry and loud tears
My dark house is full of comets

And finally, resigned:

Love has another
Place of its own

EDUCATING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE



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It is important to look at these poems not so much within the body of Merton's other poems — for the insights they provide into the man are far more important than how they measure up as good or bad poetry — but in the context of what was otherwise occurring in his life.

In 1966, he had spent a year as a hermit, relishing the freedom it afforded, but also tasting profound loneliness. When he did go to the monastery for meals or to say Mass, other monks did their best *not* to welcome him back for even those few hours. He had wanted to be a hermit and they wanted to afford him every chance to be one. This was not done out of spite or jealousy, for Merton was beloved by his community. He plainly missed some aspects of community life, the support, friendship, and approbation of his fellow monks.

He felt more alone than he had since entering Gethsemani; he was in constant pain. Into this gap came the young nurse M.

Before he left for the Far East in 1968, on what would be his last journey (to die of an accidental electrocution in Bangkok) he had resolved the question of M. He would not leave the Trappists; he knew his true calling. These poems, with no apology to his order, his enormous public or his searching soul, serve as a chronicle of those golden days in the autumn of his life. They represent a tribute to a young woman he loved desperately and add still another cubit to his continually growing stature.

In brief

THOMAS MERTON, *by Victor A. Kramer. G.K. Hall, $17.95, 181 pp.*

In focusing on Merton's life and his myriad connections, Monica Furlong and Michael Mott treat his books as milestones on the way. Victor A. Kramer's briefer study, unnoticed in the wake of Mott's, assesses Merton's other vocation — as a writer, the calling he had confidently answered as a layman and pursued steadily during his twenty-seven years as a monk, including fourteen as master of students or of novices.

Kramer's book is the necessary complement to Mott's in examining how Merton worked out in his writing, his testing ground, his understanding of contemplation and his responsibility to the sick world beyond the cloister — and their essential relationship. "Here," Abbott Flavian Burns, Merton's one-time student then abbot, has observed, "is the Merton I knew." "You can know Thomas Merton best through his writing," he explains, so that "here we have an interior biography," as he finds Mott's is not.

Thomas Merton does not attempt a thorough analysis of 40-odd volumes and numerous essays or an analysis of Merton's spirituality. Rather, Kramer charts Merton's course as he moves from book to book, identifying new interests and directions and qualities of style, leaving the books to be read. The poetry gets relatively more attention; the prose can more readily speak for itself. We see how Merton continued developing as a poet to the end, becoming more experimental, and how his prose mellows, recognizes the complexity of things, deepens in compassion.

The pages given *Seven Storey Mountain* are indicative of Kramer's method. Merton locates himself in Dante's *Purgatorio*, carefully organizing his earlier life in the frame of the need for and receipt of grace — in unforeseen ways. The book's singular fame among twentieth-century religious autobiographies Kramer sees as deriving from Merton's storytelling talent, his gradual unfolding of his life, the continuing air of anticipation, and his success in encouraging others in their spiritual quest through his account of his own — partly through "a tone of near amazement that everything is finally working out." Merton the writer has passed into the cloister, and his careful account ranges from the formal language of contemplation to the anecdotal, ironic, and amusing: the reader is reassured that the monastery is not another world altogether.

Kramer's studies of Elizabeth Madox Roberts (from the adjacent Kentucky county), Carolyn Gordon, James Agee, and Walker Percy anticipate his particular attention to Merton's interest in the limits of language, especially in writing of contemplation; in the misuse and abuse of language all around us; and in the contribution of language — and writing — to his own intellectual and spiritual growth.

From book to book, Kramer notes, the root problem for Merton is modern man's malaise — his absorption in economic individualism and the materialism of mass society, his effort to go it alone, fearfully guarding hiding places from God and himself. In a lonely and troubled world, one can find meaning only in the mystery of an encounter with God at the center of one's being.

WILLIAM H. SLAVICK

DOOMSDAY OR DETERRENCE? ON THE ANTINUCLEAR ISSUE, *by Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller. M.E. Sharpe, $12.95, 154 pp.*

Fehér and Heller's objective is to analyze the antinuclear movement from the perspective of a democratic socialist politics dedicated to the maintenance of life and the enhancement of freedom. They believe that the antinuclear movement's contribution to these goals has been mixed. They acknowledge that the movement has raised legitimate criticisms of President Reagan's irresponsible management of Soviet-American relations. They also think that its critique of industrial civilization could be an important contribution to a politics that limits the possibility of nuclear war and permits democratic control of technology.

But the vast bulk of the argument focuses on the flaws of the European wing of the movement. The authors maintain that the activists' use of fear has fostered a "Sarajevo mentality" when there is "absolutely no reason to feel and behave as if we were on the brink of a global nuclear war." They contend that European antinuclearists have been excessively critical of American policy and not sufficiently realistic about Soviet aims. Further, the movement has given little evidence of knowing how the transition from the present Cold War to its vision of perpetual peace would be managed.

Fehér and Heller believe that all these tendencies reflect a pervasive defeatism that works to the advantage of the Soviet Union. This has already been seen, they

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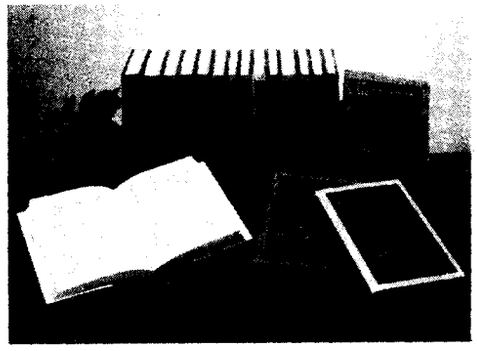

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suggest, in the European movement's shameless depiction of Solidarity as irresponsible trouble-makers upsetting a tolerable status quo. Further capitulation is likely in the future, especially on the issue of German reunification. In the final analysis, the authors contend that Soviet aims and movement philosophy may converge to produce a catastrophic result; namely, the "self-Vichyization of Europe." On all these points, the authors present arguments that ought to be taken very seriously.

But what is so irritating about *Doomsday or Deterrence?* is that it conveniently ignores evidence that would lead to a richer, more complex description of the movement. There is little attention to what E.P. Thompson has said about the relationship between preventing extinction and promoting freedom and why it is incumbent upon the peace movement to "make the indivisibility of these two causes even more explicit." Snide comment to the effect that churches are more interested in life than freedom replaces serious analysis of the role that religion has played in the development of the movement. Finally, the volume almost totally neglects antinuclear activity in the United States. Fehér and Heller simply do not discuss the Catholic bishops, the American scientists with international reputations who have lent their prestige to the cause, or the proliferation of local activity calling for a change in the nation's global posture.

Highlighting the more disturbing features evident in the wave of activism that swept Europe in the early 1980's almost guarantees that their critique will not generate the kind of self-examination and dialogue that parts of it should.

ROBERT D. HOLSWORTH

Correspondence

(Continued from page 578)

when compared to the wonderful things we had received from it.

This assurance that we had been richly blessed emboldened us to go out on the highways and byways with our invitation to the banquet. We did not give much thought to the possibility that it could become a pot-luck to which the guests might bring their own contributions. This blind spot is probably what makes our enterprise seem "pretty weird" to the present generation.

Debra Campbell's discernment of *The Faith of Our Fathers* as an essential part of our spirit's amalgam is very accurate. Cardinal Gibbons would have been a good patron for the guild (if we could have chosen one from outside the roll of canonized saints).

DOROTHY GOLDEN CLINGMAN

Aiding the contras

Baton Rouge, La.

To the Editors: If the Catholic church is as influential on Central American policy as claimed by J. Bryan Hehir, then his Church/World Watch article [August 15] is adding insult to the injury your "In Messiness, Veritas" editorial and Edward Sheehan's article [May 9] undoubtedly caused the people of Nicaragua. You claim to be anti-*contra*, but with enemies like you the *contras* do not need many friends.

Hehir makes no mention of Bishop Vega's lobbying action for the *contra* terrorists. Bishop Vega claims he had no intention of helping ram through the $100 million aid for the *contras*, yet he confused the administration to the point that Reagan publicly thanked him for his help. Hehir also fails to mention Bishop Vega's ignoring the *contra* terrorist killing of thirty-two Nicaraguan peasants in his diocese just prior to his expulsion. He has yet to denounce this act. . . .

It is true that the American bishops through the NCCB lobbied generally against *contra* aid. However, few of them said anything at the grassroots level. Here in southern Louisiana, predominantly Catholic, not a single Catholic bishop has spoken out on this issue. With the exception of the two Louisiana congresswomen, Boggs and Long, every Louisiana congressman and senator has voted consistently for *contra* aid.

The history of Central America tells us the Catholic hierarchy, with a few notable exceptions, has always sided with the oligarchies and/or a conservative military against the indigenous and peasant peoples. This is precisely what is happening in Nicaragua. If the wider church — the Holy See, in Western Europe, and the United States — wants to see peace in Central America they must recognize this fact and subject it to a strong, unified condemnation. A good beginning would be to ask Bishop Vega to condemn the July 3 massacre and the activities of the *contra* terrorists in general, and then ask the Sandinistas to rescind their expulsion order.

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Parish Programs
- Many different Bible study groups can meet weekly, mornings, afternoons and evenings, at the rectory, at the convent, in a classroom, in a parish learning center—wherever the parish has a television set with a video cassette player. One participant runs the video cassette that explains the coming Sunday's readings and leads the discussion following the outline in SHARE THE WORD magazine. Bibles should be kept handy for immediate reference.
- Invite parishioners before and after the principal Masses on Sunday to a learning area equipped with a television set and a video cassette player to study and reflect on the Sunday lectionary readings proclaimed that day. If the parishioners meet after Mass, light refreshments can be served to help build community. This program could be coordinated by a parish deacon or the director of religious education.
- SHARE THE WORD video cassettes can be an excellent aid to help lectors prepare for the Sunday readings.
- Assemble a team of six or seven parishioners to meet with the priests and deacons at the rectory for one hour early in the week to view SHARE THE WORD video cassettes and to offer homily suggestions for the following Sunday. Each week the parishionier longest on the team leaves the group and is replaced by another parishioner to assure the flow of fresh insights.

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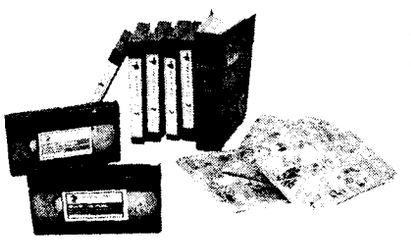
Use SHARE THE WORD video cassettes and SHARE THE WORD magazine to enhance the lectionary as a primary catechetical tool.
- View the video cassettes as part of the sessions during the week to help catechumens appreciate the depth of God's Word



and its relationship to all they will do and believe as Catholics. SHARE THE WORD magazine and Bibles should be kept handy.
- View the video cassettes as part of the weekly training for sponsors, catechists, spiritual directors and other team ministers. Their personal ministries with catechumens during the week should be based on the Word of God.
- View the video cassettes as the first part of dismissal sharing sessions on Sunday. A side effect of this will be that sponsors and team members can join the group after Eucharist and will be present for more of the personal sharing.

Religious Education for High School Students
- As part of the religion program for Catholic high school juniors and seniors, and to encourage regular Sunday Mass attendance, spend one period each week viewing and discussing SHARE THE WORD video cassettes and SHARE THE WORD magazine. Student copies of the Bible should be at hand.
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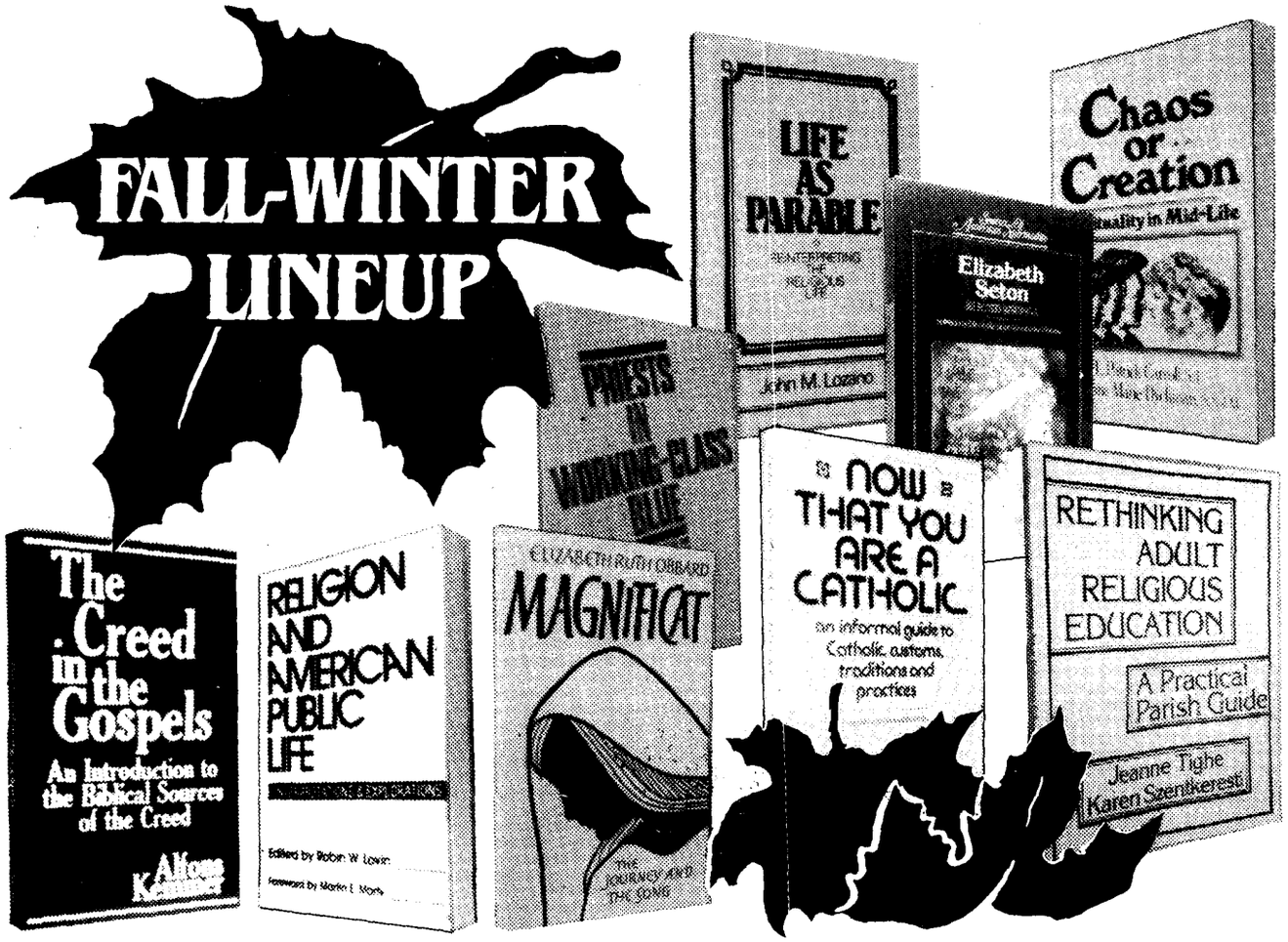
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